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Case Study: FastBack™ Chronic Pain

Spine Team Assessments Provide Single-Visit Approach to Chronic Pain

Problem: Elaine* was the doctor's nightmare: An angry person, she had been out of work for four years, with a history of three back operations and longstanding opioid dependency. Yet within a few weeks of meeting her new physician, he had a plan and she was happy with it. How did that happen?

Solution: The local healthcare system invited Haig et al. Consulting to train its rehabilitation team in its single-visit Spine Team Assessment protocol.

Approach: The Spine Team Assessment team meeting and documentation process provides a point-by-point list of actions, goals, and persons responsible for unraveling each case. In one well-coordinated, evidence-based visit, a doctor can unravel the psychological and social barriers to recovery, provide objective evidence of reversible deconditioning, and test a patient's ability to perform important work and home activities. Through detailed online and in-person instruction we teach the pain rehabilitation team everything needed to build a Spine Team Assessment in two specific areas:

- On the clinical end, that includes questionnaires, medical records, training in testing, and report generation.
- For business interests, we address physical space, equipment, personnel, marketing, and quality improvement processes.

Outcome: The team found that Elaine was so out of shape that she could not climb a flight of stairs, yet she was afraid to move so she would not exercise. Her job was still waiting for her, but she had not talked to her supervisor in a year. The team structured an individualized program of counseling, exercise at the local gym, and gradual return to work.

Lessons Learned: When the complex factors that create chronic back pain disability are clearly laid out by an expert team, patients and doctors can focus away from miracle cures and get on with improving the life of the patient. This is complex and hard work, but with training, Haig et al. Consulting's processes efficiently turns a neophyte team into experts.

**Names have been changed to protect privacy.*