

*The Heart and Science of Medical Management*

# Reducing Human Error in Utilization Review Decision Making

**The best  
automated  
programs will  
provide UR  
in as little  
as 1.7 days.**

**E**mployers and carriers are always looking for ways to ensure their workers' compensation programs are effective, compliant and focused on what's best for injured workers. They can do their due diligence in choosing a managed care program with a strong reputation that meets their needs, but how can they assure their injured workers receive the best care protocol without the element of human error?

It's not an easy answer considering people—specifically the individual adjuster, case manager and program supervisor—manage claims. These professionals need the tools to make the best decisions, especially for more difficult claims, within their busy and complicated workloads.

The good news is the tools are available—primarily in the form of utilization review (UR) programs based on proven evidenced-based guidelines. However, the reality is UR often goes unused or is used inconsistently. A recent analysis of 50,000 claims for a large workers' comp (WC) carrier showed that nearly 28% of the time treatment exceeded evidence-based guidelines.

## Guidelines-based decision making

While many claims do not require UR, ones that do should use the best guidelines possible—such as ACOEM and ODG. They should also be adapted to meet the specific needs of your industry, workforce and goals. When guidelines are flexible (e.g., adapt to the recommendations and insights of physicians who are experienced and knowledgeable in workers' comp), current and, most importantly, uniformly and consistently applied, costs decrease and outcomes improve.

Effective and consistent use of UR is more complex given the demands of the workers' compensation industry. Adjusters constantly pushed to settle claims quickly; entrenched organizational practices; and non-collaborative decision-making often create problems.



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For UR to be effective it must have these capabilities:

- › flexibility to meet individual worker and organizational needs
- › consistency so all workers can secure its benefits
- › efficiency to be applied to the workplace in a pragmatic and cost effective manner

#### Finding the answers

Incorporating automated technology with real-time medical guidance, including when to refer to UR, can go a long way in improving this situation. It takes the emotional guess-work out of managing claims and supports and enhances rapid communication among adjusters and case managers.

Genex Services, the nation's largest provider of workers' compensation clinical services, offers the solutions today's employers and carriers need to ensure appropriate and consistent utilization review. Genex's automated UR software, APEX, incorporates the statistical analysis of 50 million bills, multiple evidence-based guidelines and applies an organization's unique medical management strategy to deliver an accurate and immediate treatment decision. The result is better outcomes for injured workers, adherence to state and local regulations and a focused approach to cost containment.