

November 18, 2016

Weekly Legislative Wrap-Up

State of the States



The Department of Industrial Relations issued a [progress report](#) on the implementation of Independent

Medical Reviews (IMR), established by SB 863 in 2012. The report found that the average number of days for an IMR decision to be completed has decreased from 56 days in 2014 to 10 days by mid-2015.

Pharmaceuticals still remain the most common treatment category submitted to IMR at 49 percent. Overall, 80 percent of IMR decisions uphold earlier denials.



A new [WCRI study](#) has found that while 2011 reforms to the state's workers' comp system have helped

reduce medical costs by 30 percent, medical costs are still 18 percent higher than other states examined, which included California, Florida, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Texas. The report adds fuel to the fire that the state's workers' comp system needs further reforms. The state's band aid budget passed earlier this year only covers expenses through the end of this year, meaning a new budget battle, where workers' comp is on the table, is inevitable



A new [study](#) by the National Council on Compensation Insurance (NCCI) found that many of the early fears that the Affordable Care Act (ACA) would prevent injured workers from accessing treatment, were unfounded. There was a fear that the ACA, which required insurance coverage for individuals, would overwhelm primary care doctors and limit ability of injured workers to access those same primary care physicians. However, the study found no evidence of such "crowding out" and that the ACA has improved overall wellness of individuals, which helps limit severity and length of claims in the workers' comp system.



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A new rule that would require nurse practitioners treating injured workers and prescribing

opioids to follow specific treatment guidelines may be adopted next week. The rule, a result of a bill passed earlier in the year, would adopt the Federation of State Medical Boards model policy treatment guidelines which focuses on chronic pain treatment. Among the recommendations in the guidelines are increased focus on initial assessments of patients and limited increases in opioid dosages without consideration of the risks and exploring non-opioid therapies.



The Alabama state medical board is considering bolstering their prescription drug monitoring

program (PDMP). Joining the growing list of states, Alabama is considering a rule requiring all doctors to check the PDMP before prescribing a controlled substance. The state has had a PDMP since 2006 and currently requires pharmacies to report dispensing of a controlled substance daily.

Where in the U.S.A. is Jayne & Danielle?

Jayne and Danielle will be in the home office next week. The following week Jayne will be in Washington, DC for a conference and Danielle will be in New Orleans for the National Workers' Compensation and Disability Conference.

Questions, Concerns, Suggestions? Let Us Know.

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