Gaylord Specialty Healthcare

PMA's Healthcare Risk Management Expertise Helps Gaylord Hospital Reduce Workers’ Compensation Claims & Trim Program Costs

Gaylord Hospital was founded in Wallingford, Connecticut in 1902 as a tuberculosis sanatorium and provided long-term treatment options during the 50-year epidemic. Gaylord’s expertise became recognized nationwide, and many well-known individuals, including American playwright Eugene O’Neill, took advantage of its rehabilitative care and services.

PARTNERSHIP RESULTS

- Safe Patient Handling Program reduces annual injury costs by more than $400,000
- Return-to-Work Repeater Program helps reduce employee injuries by 60%
- Interdisciplinary Executive Workers’ Compensation Committee meets monthly to review accidents and implement corrective action plans
Today, Gaylord is a premier 137-bed chronic disease hospital specializing in the care and treatment of people with medically complex conditions. The facility provides rehabilitation for brain and spinal cord injuries, as well as stroke, neurological, orthopedic, and pulmonary conditions. Gaylord also runs outpatient clinics to provide physical therapy, occupational therapy, speech therapy, and psychiatry services.

As a self-insured organization, the hospital uses a third-party administrator (TPA) to handle its workers’ compensation claims and help manage its program. In 2002, Gaylord selected PMA Management Corp. of New England, a PMA Companies third-party administrator, for its expertise in healthcare risk management—and the partnership has yielded healthy results ever since.

Establishing a Safe Patient Handling Program

Gaylord’s nursing department was experiencing a significant increase in patient handling injuries at the time the hospital partnered with PMA. “One of our first matters of business was to assess Gaylord’s Safe Patient Handling Program,” says Debra Zotti, PMA Senior Risk Control Specialist. “We were looking for problem spots, but the only real problem we found was that a formal program didn’t exist.”

So the teams got to work. Zotti collaborated with Gaylord’s Nursing and Therapy personnel to develop and implement a formal Safe Patient Handling Program. They trained the nurses on all elements of the program, including minimal lift practices, patient handling interventions, and team lift scenarios. The program provided best practice techniques and empowered nursing staff to hold each other accountable for creating a safe working environment—and it’s working.

Annual costs for these injuries exceeded $420,000 in 2005, and by Gaylord’s most recent fiscal year, those costs were reduced to just over $9,300. In 2005, safe patient handling claims cost Gaylord nearly $1,200 per day or over $12 per patient day—now the daily cost is under $26 with a cost per patient day of just $0.24.

Forming an Executive Workers’ Compensation Committee

Gaylord’s leadership team is committed to ensuring a safe work environment for its employees.

With guidance from PMA, they formed an Executive Workers’ Compensation Committee comprised of PMA experts and managers from Gaylord’s Human Resources, Nursing, Facilities, and Therapy departments. The committee convenes monthly to discuss employee incidents, implement corrective action plans, and develop proactive programs to continually reduce claims and costs.

“It is important to remain focused on these important initiatives,” says Sonja LaBarbera, Gaylord Senior Director of Therapy Services. “Our monthly meetings are an effective way to stay in touch with the programs we have in place and ensure their success.”

Implementing a Return-to-Work Program

With a diverse team of physicians, surgeons, nurses, and technicians, it is extremely important for Gaylord to keep them healthy and on the job. One of the most effective ways to do so is a robust Return-to-Work (RTW) Program.

Zotti assisted Gaylord in establishing a formalized RTW Program that enables injured workers to return to the job in modified duty roles. “This is the employee’s bridge to recovery,” adds Zotti. “It keeps the employee active during his or her recovery and helps reduce claim costs while assisting Gaylord with its production and operational needs.”

Gaylord also maintains a Repeater Program as part of its larger RTW effort. The program is designed to prevent repeat incidents through counseling, re-education, and guidance to employees on strategies for avoiding incident exposures.
At the Heart of it All, Open Communication & Partnership

The Human Resources team at Gaylord uses PMA’s 24-hour online risk management information system, PMA Cinch®, to report, manage, and track its claims. The system makes running standardized or customized reports a simple task, and can help to identify claim trends.

Additionally, PMA’s Risk Control Services team helped Gaylord implement a process whereby all members of the Executive Workers’ Compensation Committee are immediately notified when an employee reports an injury. “This process solidifies the open, collaborative nature of our approach to controlling claim costs,” says William Cofrances, PMA Senior Vice President.

Ultimately, Gaylord and PMA are working together to reduce the hospital’s total cost of risk and reduce employee injuries.

“PMA has been a great partner to Gaylord,” says Janine Epright, Chief Financial Officer, Gaylord Hospital. “They’re not only helping us to reduce our costs, but also suggesting and helping to implement best practices that are ensuring employee safety and sustained cost savings.”

About PMA Companies

PMA Companies (www.pmacompanies.com) provides risk management solutions and services in the U.S., specializing in workers’ compensation and offering property and casualty insurance. A member of Old Republic Companies, PMA Companies is headquartered in Blue Bell, PA.

Old Republic International Corporation (NYSE: ORI) is one of the nation’s 50 largest publicly held insurance organizations.

PMA Companies includes:

- **PMA Insurance Group**, specializing in workers’ compensation, and providing other commercial property & casualty insurance products

- **PMA Management Corp. and PMA Management Corp. of New England**, providing results-driven TPA and Risk Services specializing in workers’ compensation and liability