

When I was asked to express my views on what we went through dealing with workers compensation, I didn't know where to start. My husband was injured in 1999, so this has been 7 years of watching him go from a very out-going person, he played sports, loved to socialize with our friends, we took trips, we were like most families. When my husband was working, he made good money and with me working, financially we were doing well.

Then he had an accident; our lives changed. Since his accident, he went from what he was to someone who can't even walk around a store for any more than 10 to 15 minutes, can't go for long drives or take trips, socializing pretty much ended because he gets really sore, that takes any enjoyment out of it for us. Things in our lives that most people take for granted, for example, mowing the lawn, painting a room in your home, he is just not able to do. All the while he feels less of a man. I don't think that way, but he does.

Workers Compensation says he can work at a desk job, really, everything in his life he had to give up, what are they thinking? I feel they try to push people into doing things that an injured worker just can't do so they can get you out of the system.

I feel that the WCB doctors should be more involved with the claimant's own family physician. In our case, my husband was given a "trial" of a pain medication by the WCB doctor, as a result of this, my daughter (17 at the time) and I went to wake him up and couldn't, at that point we called an ambulance and he was taken to Emergency. The pills given to him reacted against the medication he was already taking, and as a result he went into a "drug induced delerium" and coma. I f we had decided to let him sleep that morning, because some nights he doesn't sleep well and we let him sleep, he could have died. I can't put into words what that experience put us through. My husband spent 4 days in the hospital and we almost lost the most important person in our lives, because the doctor from WCB didn't see fit to check what medication my husband was already on!

At one point, my husband was told by WCB that he had to see another doctor from the WCB (not a specialist). He spent 10 - 15 minutes with this doctor and he decided that my husband could work for 8 hours a day, 40 hours per week at a desk job. This doctor never laid eyes on my husband before and did not really know anything about the history of my husband's injuries. Again, this we feel was another attempt by the WCB to get my husband back to work without any regard for his injuries. I know without any doubt, that if my husband could, he would be back to work in a minute. This brought him down further. Our doctor, as well as a specialist, has been saying all along that he was not fit to return to work. This is another example of the WCB ignoring the family physicians. My husband sees our family doctor regularly every 4 to 6 weeks, what right does the WCB have to go against the injured worker's own doctor, the one who knows him best?

When my husband was deemed, on January 20, 2006 (8 hours a day, 40 hours a week) his benefit was cut in half, he was devastated, we couldn't believe it! It was as if they dumped him. As a result, he appealed. The appeal was submitted on November 20, 2006, the hearing was held on July 12, 2007 and the decision was received on August 21, 2007. It took a year and a half, from the time of the deeming (January 2006) to the date we ended up in front of the Tribunal (July 12, 2007) fighting this decision. We actually waited 7 months just for an appeal date! This should never have happened; the stress on both of us was horrible! We were fortunate because we had a very special

person from a local community organization, who supported us and guided us through this time. She presented our case in front of the Tribunal and we won our case - the Tribunal decision was that "the deeming is to be annulled by the WHSCC and he is to receive full long-term (LTD) benefits effective January 23, 2006", but we asked ourselves why did it have to go that far? Why did it take so long!

If I could give some recommendations to WCB, I would say the following:

1. Listen, really listen to the injured worker, (I don't believe they do) it's like they hear only what they want; they have their own agenda!
2. Communicate with the injured worker's doctors. (family physicians and the specialists). They know their patients more than a strange doctor would. This could help alleviate the stress for both the injured worker and his family!
3. Shorten time lines. The WCB gives you 1 year to appeal their decision; it takes all that time and more to get a decision. To wait 7 months just for a date for a hearing is totally unreasonable! The financial stress is added to the injury and that makes things worse.

Accidents happen! It's a fact of life! It's bad enough to deal with the injuries but along with the injury, is the depression, feelings of being less of a person because you can't provide for your family in the same way as before the accident. Nobody should go through what our family has gone through and still is; it's not all money! The pain doesn't go away, for the injured worker or his family.

My advise for any family of an injured worker is;

1. Never give up, fight it until the end.
2. If you are asked to take medication by a doctor from WCB, insist that he clear it with your doctor or whoever gave you the medication in the first place. It could save your life.
3. Keep every bit of documentation from the start. Record all communication with WCB; all doctor appointments and any tests as well.
4. Get help with your case. If you feel overwhelmed, there are people who can help.
5. If your partner is going through this, support him/her because they will need you. If given the opportunity to see a psychologist or councilor, take advantage and do it. It will help you stay focused and as a couple it could help you understand what your partner is going through and visa versa.

It has been a long rough ride for both of us but in spite of everything, we got through it. I have faith in my husband and I know for a fact that he did everything he was asked to do. All this goes much deeper than an injury; sometime a little help shows you there is a light at the end of the tunnel. Many times we felt that the light went out for us but we persevered.

What I would like to say to the workers at WCB, case managers, adjudicators etc. is; when an accident happens to a person, it isn't only the injury you are dealing with. In my husband's case, this injury was an entire life changing experience. He had to give up so

much. I don't think "they get it" and for me that is what hurts.

I hope, even in a small way, this helps. Thank you for taking the time to read this.

An injured worker's family perspective. Mrs. Ann Parks

(Kevin Parks injured worker)