



BROUGHT TO YOU BY THE SELECT MEDICAL OUTPATIENT DIVISION

The novel coronavirus (COVID-19) has wide ranging effects on all our lives. The effects on the workers' compensation system and physical and occupational therapy have been significant and will continue to evolve. Confirmed COVID-19 cases in the United States are approaching 2.5 million and have resulted in more than 120,000 deaths.¹ Individuals who are at risk for severe symptoms, need for the greatest care and are likely to have the longest recovery path share co-morbidities previously shown to delay recovery from work-related musculoskeletal disorders. These shared co-morbidities include individuals who are older and obese, have chronic and poorly controlled health conditions such as diabetes, lung disease (including asthma), heart conditions, compromised immunity (including from smoking) and liver and kidney disease.²



The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) reversed earlier guidance on recordability of COVID-19 as a work-related injury or illness. On May 19, OSHA outlined when and how to record workers who are verified as having contracted COVID-19. This change in position by OSHA will make COVID-19 a primary diagnosis for workers' compensation claims. Additionally, COVID-19 will be a co-morbidity on some claims, complicating recovery from other workplace injuries and illnesses including musculoskeletal conditions. Physical and occupational therapists treating injured workers need to be prepared to rehabilitate workers with a history of COVID-19, as both a primary or secondary condition. COVID-19 can result in adverse effects on multiple body systems including respiratory, cardiovascular, circulatory and nervous and the widespread resultant deconditioning/fatigue and/or cognitive impairment.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, Select Medical organized a team of experts including clinicians and physicians with specialties in infection diseases and physical medicine, speech-language pathologists and physical and occupational therapists from its critical illness recovery hospitals, inpatient rehabilitation hospitals and outpatient therapy centers. Under the direction of Select Medical's Education Department, this team developed policies and procedures, education and certification in the treatment of individuals with COVID-19. This share of knowledge and a review of the emerging literature surrounding the effects and treatment of COVID-19 has resulted in our Recovery and Reconditioning Program.

Select Medical has developed champions in every market through the provision of competency-based learning specific to COVID-19 rehabilitation. Centers have been provided tools such as spirometers and oxygen saturation monitors to keep patients safe, develop individualized appropriate programs and track progress. The program is designed to be provided either in person from a distance using our telerehab platform.

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This comprehensive program is designed to promote recovery of:

- Balance and stability
- Cardiopulmonary issues
- Consequences of clotting disorders, including stroke and amputation
- Cognitive or memory impairments
- Decreased endurance and limited breathing capability
- Dizziness or vertigo
- Functional mobility and activities of daily living issues
- General fatigue
- Musculoskeletal pain or soreness
- Range of motion limitations
- Weakness

Alan Evans, P.T., vice president of education for Select Medical, describes the program as “a comprehensive, multi-system reconditioning program designed to safely and effectively address the broad variety of clinical sequelae that can arise from, and persist long after, the development of COVID-19.” The expanding knowledge base on COVID-19 requires any treatment program to rapidly integrate emerging best practice. Evans indicates, “This is where Select Medical, by virtue of its multi-disciplinary expertise across multiple environments of care, coupled with its technological infrastructure can excel in supporting the patients and communities we serve. We have the ability to harvest best practice from evidence as it continues to grow, include it in our treatment guidelines and propagate it instantaneously across more than 1,700 clinical sites.”

Select Medical is the premier provider of outpatient physical therapy and prides itself on its philosophy of One Select. The Recovery and Reconditioning Program is the embodiment of this One Select philosophy, combining the vast expertise, specialties and resources of 46,000 employees across the continuum of care to meet new challenges and deliver the best patient care to those we serve.

References:

- 1) <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/cases-updates/cases-in-us.html>
- 2) <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/people-with-disabilities.html>
- 3) https://www.osha.gov/memos/2020-05-19/revised-enforcement-guidance-recording-cases-coronavirus-disease-2019-covid-19_ftn1

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