

# Post-Surgery Recovery Options



by Jeffrey Smith, MD

## Part 1: Cutting Costs Without Compromising Quality

Recent challenges within the health care community may potentially affect the clinical and fiscal operations under our care. We must step up to these challenges. High expectations placed upon various payer sources results in fewer available resources and reduced reimbursement. These changes require each of us to consider new ways to be more financially responsible without sacrificing quality of care. It may not be easy. Yet, those who remain passionate within this service-based industry can turn these obstacles into opportunities.

As orthopedic surgeons, we too must seek alternative ways to meet the changing need and contribute to the reduction of health care costs. One area of focus includes postsurgical care for low-risk, peripheral joint-replacement patients. A move to establish relationships with service providers outside of the acute hospital arena is gaining traction. In this new model, a short-term stay at a progressive skilled nursing and rehab center follows a procedure at a day surgical center. The staff receives a thorough orientation for compliance with necessary protocols and procedures. This ensures a successful intervention that most effectively restores a patient's functionality.

The interdisciplinary approach focuses on specific daily interventions, which relate to assessment/monitoring, pain management, therapeutic services and functional mobility. Setting daily, short-term individual goals also helps to meet the patient's needs. Upon discharge, the patient receives home instructions along with a follow-up orthopedic appointment schedule. We can be confident that this patient-focused, outcome-centered model presents a quality model program. We are proud of the strides we've made and embrace the partnerships we've established with our health care providers.

## Part 2: Home Health Care Services: An Often Under-Utilized Health Care Delivery System

In today's day and age, insurance companies and consumers look for ways to stretch their health care dollar further. Developing efficient, cost-effective health care delivery systems is an important part of that goal. The partnership between same-day surgery centers and home health agencies has done just that. Patients can have surgery in a state-of-the-art facility and receive health care services while recovering in the convenience and comfort of their own home.

The fact is, many health care treatments that were once offered only in a hospital or a doctor's office can now be done in your home. In general, home health care provides treatment for an illness, injury or after a surgical procedure. Services include skilled nursing, physical therapy, occupational therapy, speech therapy, medical social work and certified home health aides. Under the direction of a physician, a team of home health care workers provides the prescribed treatment for the patient in their home.

In addition to the convenience, home health care is usually less expensive and just as effective as care you'd get in a hospital or skilled nursing facility. You get better, regain your independence, and become as self-sufficient as possible.

Most insurance plans cover these services. In short, they are an effective and efficient health care delivery system.

With more and more surgical procedures performed in day surgery centers (patients going home on the day of surgery or after a 23-hour stay), a partnership with home health agencies is a natural fit. An intensive interview and assessment process determines which patients are appropriate to discharge straight home after a procedure.



With nursing and physical therapy visits performed on the day of discharge or within 24 hours, the patient and surgeon can have peace of mind knowing the patient is under the care and supervision of a trained medical professional. Daily nursing and/or therapy visits ensure that the post-op protocols are followed until the patient no longer needs services or is referred for continued treatment in an outpatient setting.

