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Welcome to NICE Snapshots®

A note from Accordant's Medical Director, Dr. Andrew Krueger:



Building a new clinical program isn't a decision we make lightly. From start to finish, program development can last from months to years. We spend thousands of hours researching and establishing clinical documentation, programming technology, and developing valuable metrics reporting. However, we plan and execute with purpose. Our company goals are rooted in quality department and we devote ourselves to improving clinical delivery through efficient and measured care. You will find that Accordant's clinical outcomes often exceed national averages.

For our clients, all across the nation, hospitalizations continue to represent the largest cost component. Program members, like their treatment plans, vary in complexity of illness and situation. We know that early program engagement and dynamic, personalized interventions help members to avoid complications that can lead to emergency room visits and inpatient admissions. And as patient needs change, so do our strategies and models. With each new clinical program, we are expanding our specialized outreach, improving interactions between members and their care teams, and impacting lives on an individual basis. We are fortunate to have insight into these complicated, yet powerful relationships. I hope you enjoy reading about the interactions taking place between Accordant's nurses and your program members.

In good health,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Andrew Krueger M.D." with a stylized flourish at the end.

Andrew Krueger, M.D., FACP
Medical Director, Accordant Health Services

A Trusted Partner for the Journey

The health care system is full of hectic schedules and case loads.

Accordant's Care Management nurses understand that, often, what members need is someone with whom they can build rapport, a partner or a trusted resource, and a safe place in which to discuss concerns and develop actionable steps to improve outcomes. We provide that to our members every day and ensure members have a place to turn for education, support, and assistance.

Recently, with the support from an Accordant nurse, a member with hepatitis C was empowered to start medication and remain compliant. The member had received the medication to treat hepatitis C, but was unsure as to whether it could be taken concomitantly with cold medications or used with other things like hair dye or sunscreen. The member felt safe talking with the Accordant nurse and called for assistance. The member had already tried contacting the treating physician twice, but hadn't received a call back yet. The member wanted to start the hepatitis C medication as soon as possible, but had a cold and needed these questions answered first.

The member was notably fearful about starting the medication and had many questions about what to expect and what to do.

The Accordant nurse called the pharmacist at CVS/specialty to confirm the member could use cold medicine, hair dye, and sunscreen while taking this medication then called the member back to relay this information. The nurse also provided the member with information about the prescribed medication, including what the member could expect when starting it. The Accordant nurse promised to call the member back in a week to follow up and answer any other questions the member may have.



During the follow-up call, the member reported successfully starting the hepatitis C medication. The member had headaches for the first few days, but that had improved. The member also reported feeling more energized than before. The member thanked the Accordant nurse saying,

"I just want to thank you for getting back to me. You are awesome."

The member also elected to change interactivity permissions with Accordant to include more follow-up calls and management as a result of the positive experience with the Accordant nurse saying, "I feel comfortable talking to [you]."

Support for the Newly Diagnosed



A new diagnosis of a chronic illness can be a time of great challenge and uncertainty, especially for members who must manage multiple comorbidities. Accordant's Care Management nurses understand the need for education and increased support during this time. We build a rapport with our members and support their whole-person wellness by working with them through issues and concerns, offering education and emotional support, and setting goals so they can take proactive steps towards wellness.

A new diagnosis of RA (rheumatoid arthritis) can be challenging. **For one member, managing this new diagnosis along with other comorbidities, like diabetes and anxiety, was made easier with the education and support provided by the Accordant nurse.** At each step of the way, the nurse offered assistance to help the member take action and address health concerns to improve quality of life.

The member's RA was well-controlled with only occasional stiffness associated with weather and stress. **During a recent call, the member requested additional information on myofascial release, which the member had been receiving weekly to assist with shoulder pain and limited range of motion.** The member had already discussed this symptom with the rheumatologist, who felt it was not related to the RA. The Accordant nurse reviewed the signs and symptoms this member was experiencing, and the member noted that this was likely due to a history of playing tennis. The nurse provided verbal education on myofascial release, the benefits, and how it can help improve range of motion. It was costly, according to the member, but had made a significant improvement in shoulder flexibility and movement.

The Accordant nurse also provided significant education and management to this member for diabetes and risk of heart disease. Having RA can significantly increase the risk for heart disease or stroke, and all members with RA receive intensive education on the importance of maintaining heart health. The member noted an increase in blood pressure and the nurse encouraged the member to continue monitoring blood pressure closely and discussed the use of a blood pressure log. A blood pressure log would allow more accurate reporting of blood pressure numbers over a period of time. The member also has multiple medications to take daily and admitted to missing a few doses here and there. The nurse suggested using a pillbox to help the member remember to take medications and verify whether any had been missed. Together, they discussed places the member could store the pillbox to help ensure medication adherence.

During this same call, the member also acknowledged having difficulty establishing good eating habits. The member has type 1 diabetes and wears an insulin pump. The member had tried the Paleo diet for a short time, but had not found it helpful. The member was trying to decrease carbohydrate intake and make better food choices.

Talking with the doctor is important. The member and nurse discussed healthy eating habits and other things the member could do, like starting an exercise plan. They discussed ways the member could add more exercise, which could also help with the anxiety and depression, such as yoga and breathing exercises for relaxation.

The member reported having recently started talk therapy which had been very helpful. The nurse assessed the member's mood and the member reported feeling more encouraged to engage in self-care, particularly as a result of these conversations. According to the member, the education and support provided by the Accordant nurse were very reassuring. The fact that the nurse could follow this member and track milestones and achievements helped the member stay accountable and also offered plenty of opportunities for enhanced support and education in the face of a new diagnosis.

A Good Start for a Healthy Lifestyle

According to the American Psychological Association, studies suggest that the first two years after diagnosis with a chronic illness are the most critical to helping patients overcome gaps in knowledge, self care, and adequate emotional support.¹ People diagnosed with a chronic illness are 15 times more likely to suffer from stress, anxiety, or other psychological problems. These problems can adversely affect a patient's ability to be compliant with their treatment. They may also result in unanticipated health problems, which could increase health care costs and reduce quality of life. Accordant understands the importance of telephonic support and consistent, solid education to reinforce member knowledge throughout every stage of chronic illness, but especially during the immediate period following a new diagnosis.

For one newly-diagnosed member with Crohn's disease, the Accordant nurse provided the education and motivation needed to establish a healthy lifestyle to support the Crohn's treatment plan. The member and nurse had developed a rapport and discussed the signs and symptoms of Crohn's, including what to expect over time. During one of these calls, the member told the Accordant nurse about having nausea and vomiting and asked for support or information on how to ease those symptoms. The nurse talked with the member about the signs of a flare and encouraged the member to speak with the gastroenterologist about some dietary changes that could help.

Together, they reviewed the signs and symptoms of dehydration and intestinal blockage, and the nurse advised the member to be vigilant in calling the doctor at any sign of a problem. Additional education was mailed to this member on how to effectively manage the signs and symptoms of a Crohn's flare, with the doctor. A poorly managed flare could create complications for the member, as well as increase health care costs and lead to poor health outcomes.

During a follow-up phone call, the member reported talking with the gastroenterologist about food intolerance and how a food diary may help. The member was also making healthier choices, like switching soda for flavored water. The member has stopped drinking soda and is keeping a careful food diary to track the foods that cause nausea or vomiting or otherwise aggravate the member's reflux. The member felt much better since receiving the education from the Accordant nurse and speaking with the gastroenterologist.

The nausea and vomiting had decreased and the member felt confident in the ability to be proactive in tracking the foods that could be problematic. The member reported feeling much better and was better able to cope with the new diagnosis of Crohn's with the support and education from the Accordant nurse.

1. Source: Chronic Illness. American Psychological Association. <http://www.apa.org/helpcenter/chronic.aspx>. Accessed May 13, 2013

A Better Therapy for Improved Health

DMARDs (disease-modifying antirheumatic drugs) are a critical component to effective management of RA (rheumatoid arthritis).

DMARDs are critical for not just control of flares, but also the overall disease process. The goal of effective and regular DMARD use is to achieve remission, diminish symptoms, and stop or slow the progression of joint damage. Effective and regular DMARD use can slow RA and the progression of joint narrowing or destruction. This not only improves quality of life for members through pain reduction and increased mobility, but also reduces the potential need for hospitalization, surgery, and/or joint replacement. Accordant's nurses work collaboratively with members to review and encourage understanding of the treatment plan, provide education on DMARD use, and help members better communicate concerns with the health care team.

Accordant nurses routinely look for opportunities to assist members who are not utilizing DMARD therapy or receiving appropriate monitoring from a rheumatologist. One member with RA was in remission at the time of the call with the Accordant nurse, and stated that it had been at least one year since the last visit with the rheumatologist. The nurse provided education to the member on the signs and symptoms of a flare and also encouraged the member to continue with regular follow-up visits to the rheumatologist, even while in remission.

However, during the next assessment call, **the member reported possible signs and symptoms consistent with a flare, particularly increased pain and stiffness in ankles and shoulders and a decreased ability to preform activities of daily living.** The Accordant nurse encouraged the member to contact the doctor right away to report the potential flare and also provided education on the importance of DMARD therapy to slow RA and reduce the potential for joint damage. The nurse also mailed the member an Accordant education article: "Doctor, I Have a Question – Getting the RA Answers You Need." A follow-up call was scheduled for continued support.

During the next call, the member reported seeing the rheumatologist, beginning prednisone to relieve flare symptoms, and starting a DMARD for management of RA. The member had experienced a reduction in pain and stiffness and was having less difficulty with activities at the time of the call. The member continued to be compliant with the DMARD and scheduled visits with the rheumatologist.

The quick action by the Accordant nurse helped this member to better recognize the signs and symptoms of an RA flare, work with the rheumatologist to get an appropriate treatment plan, and significantly reduce the potential for complications related to an unmanaged RA flare. Additionally, this member had improved quality of life and lower pain scores as a result.

Breaking Down Barriers to Wellness

Managing a chronic illness can be very challenging. It can be difficult to navigate the health care system and manage multiple health care providers and medications.

Many of our members have benefitted significantly from the whole person support of the Accordant Care Management nurse, who can identify potential barriers and work with the member to develop an action plan designed to provide positive health and wellness outcomes. Our nurses advocate for and support our members to ensure they receive needed support and are empowered to proactively manage their health.

For one member with MS (multiple sclerosis), a recent intervention by the Accordant nurse improved health outcomes and assisted this member in personal wellness and proactive health management.

At the time of the call, the member told the nurse about several falls while trying to clean the bathroom. The member reported difficulty in contacting the neurologist for requests, such as getting a walker to use at home and medication refills. In fact, the member was almost out of medication, and missing treatments could result in an MS flare.

The nurse recognized several opportunities to provide whole-person support to help improve this member's quality of life and also achieve increased communication with the health care team to improve health outcomes.

The Accordant nurse provided 4 critical interventions:

Provided education on the importance of fall prevention.

Together, they discussed action items for home safety, including asking the MS Society about support. In addition to discussing the possible benefits of a home safety evaluation or professional home modifications, they also discussed the member's bone health and the benefits of calcium and vitamin D.

Contacted the MS Society and several other foundations to locate programs.

The nurse helped to find discounted or free durable medical equipment, in-home support, and other resources.

Coordinated the authorization process with member's neurologist.

A follow-up call was scheduled with the member to confirm receipt of the medication and adherence to treatment.

Provided education on building a relationship with the health care team.

The member was encouraged to follow up with their primary care physician for a referral to a new neurologist.

During the follow-up call, the member reported several proactive steps towards wellness. The member was able to find a discounted walker and was now using it to ambulate around the house.

A visit was scheduled with the primary care physician along with the request for a referral to a new neurologist. Since the member lived alone in a remote area, the nurse recommended asking the MS Society about transportation services. The member also reported compliance with the medication at that time as a result of the interventions provided by the nurse to help with refills and authorization.

The member was extremely pleased with the multiple layers of support provided by the Accordant nurse. As a result of this, the member is now much safer at home and experiencing positive health outcomes by having a plan of action to remain adherent to the MS treatment plan.



Resource Support Improves Compliance

For patients with a long-term illness, regular consultation with the doctor is critical to positive health outcomes. Routine care through phone calls and office visits can ensure compliance with the treatment plan, identify any potential problems or concerns to be addressed, and help ensure that questions or concerns are answered in a timely manner. It's also the only opportunity a doctor has to assess the effectiveness of treatment or identify any other immediate care concerns.

Sometimes poor follow-up is the result of uncontrollable barriers, like financial constraints or travel time. Accordant nurses understand that there can be many reasons for poor follow-up and work with members to identify resources and opportunities for assistance. The solutions to these barriers are uniquely tailored to meet each member's specific needs to help them stay on the path to better health.

During a recent conversation with a member who has MS (multiple sclerosis), an Accordant nurse identified an opportunity to assist in overcoming obstacles to seeing the doctor. The member reported financial constraints that prohibited trips to the doctor's office, and the copay was too costly on the member's fixed budget.

The Accordant nurse knew this was a big concern, as this member had several active MS-related symptoms that needed to be monitored regularly by the doctor. Also, the member had discontinued bladder training therapy due to cost. The member was notably upset and reported significant anxiety and stress.

Fortunately, Accordant can provide an extra layer of support to members who need additional care. The nurse referred this member to an Accordant Resource Specialist to research financial assistance options. The Resource Specialist located an assistance program for medical premiums and mailed the member an informational letter that included the program's contact information. The member reported some difficulty obtaining assistance, so the Resource Specialist offered to contact the program on the member's behalf to advocate for support. The member agreed.

The Resource Specialist called the assistance program and learned there was additional information required for approval. The Resource Specialist called the member back to relay this information and help the member complete the application. The member subsequently called the Resource Specialist and said that **the assistance program was able to lower the member's annual premiums, which made it easier to afford copay costs for doctor's visits.** Additionally, the member was also eligible for another program that provided the member with \$200 per month for copay assistance.

During a follow-up call with the Accordant nurse, the member was much more optimistic and reported much less anxiety regarding the financial challenges of treatment adherence. With the resource support provided by Accordant, the member now felt capable and empowered to live well.

The member was excited and thankful for Accordant's support and reported being able to keep all visits with the doctor, adding that the symptoms of MS had improved and the sessions for bladder training had resumed.

These program resources helped to ease stress for this member, improve routine follow-up and care from the doctor, and reduce the potential for increased health care expenses due to worsening health outcomes.



Care Coordination Improves Outcomes

A recent study by the American Academy of Family Physicians found that about half of patients leave a visit with the doctor unable to understand the instructions provided and not adherent to medications.¹

Accordant utilizes routine medication review to ensure member understanding and adherence. A verbal medication review enables the Accordant nurse to identify barriers to medication adherence and address them quickly.

The medication review was an effective method to assist with treatment compliance and prevent breakthrough seizures related to noncompliance for one Accordant member with epilepsy. In addition to epilepsy, the member also has diabetes and dementia and requires daily care and support. The member's partner and live-in caregiver completed the assessments.

During the initial assessment, the Accordant nurse performed a medication review to confirm compliance with medications. The member's caregiver was asked to read the medications and dosing directions for each medication the member was currently taking. The Accordant nurse recorded these medications and also inquired about any recent seizure activity for this member. The member's caregiver reported an increase in seizures for this member recently. The Accordant nurse was concerned about the breakthrough seizures and, with permission, contacted the member's neurologist to provide an update.

As a result of the assessment with this member, the Accordant nurse identified a need to collaborate with the neurologist's office to report the increase in seizure activity with the member and develop a plan of action.

During the call with the neurologist's office, it was discovered that this member was not taking the correct medications. The member and caregiver reported no new medications and the member was continuing to take the current epilepsy medications. However, the member's neurologist had recently made changes to the treatment plan to include an adjustment to antiepileptic medications and the addition of two medications to assist with management of dementia.

The Accordant nurse collaborated with the neurologist's office and, after multiple phone calls, discovered that the medications were sent to the wrong pharmacy. The neurologist's office requested that the member return and be seen in the office so a new prescription could be provided. The Accordant nurse called the member and relayed this information, and the member reported a previously scheduled visit with the neurologist in a few days. The Accordant nurse scheduled a follow-up call with the member and caregiver to ensure the prescription for the correct medications was provided.



During the follow-up call, the member's medications were reviewed, including the recently prescribed new medications. The member had received the new prescriptions and had filled the medications right away. As a result, the member been fully compliant with all medications and reported no additional seizures.



The member was extremely thankful for the support and the caregiver thanked the nurse profusely, saying,

“You have been great at this!”

The caregiver went on to say that they would not have been able to get resolution so quickly without the support and hard work from the Accordant nurse. This additional support improved clinical outcomes for this member, who had no breakthrough seizures once on the correct medications, and also eased stress and provided peace of mind; the Accordant nurse was just a phone call away anytime they needed support.

Support on the Road to Recovery

Radionecrosis is a painful and complicated side effect that can occur when members with oral and pharyngeal cancers are irradiated, particularly when chemoradiation is co-administered.

Radionecrosis can manifest as painful infections, ulcerations, and non-healing wounds in the bones and soft tissue of the mouth, and can create barriers to good health by limiting oral hygiene and the ability to eat and drink. Members suffering from this complication also report decreased mood and diminished quality of life at a time when their good health and well-being are critical. Accordant's Care Management program provides care coordination, education, and careful follow-up to support members through this painful period and help them on them along the path to better health.

An Accordant nurse made a measurable difference for a member who had received treatment for squamous cell carcinoma of the left tonsil with extensive lymph node involvement. The member had undergone tonsillectomy of the left tonsil and adjacent soft palate tissue, as well as lymphadenectomy, and chemotherapy with cisplatin, followed by 33 radiation treatments. A feeding tube was placed during surgery and the member requested to have it removed shortly after completing therapy. As a result of the advocacy and ongoing support by the Accordant nurse, this member avoided additional complications, like infection or diminished health due to weight loss, and was able to leverage the power of the relationship with the Accordant nurse to find hope and support.

A Difficult Recovery

The member reported significant throat, tongue, and mouth pain along with the inability to eat. The member had been noncompliant with prescribed pain medication and expressed a fear of becoming addicted.

The Accordant nurse offered support to the member and reassured them that this could be addressed with appropriate pain management.

The Accordant nurse educated the member on the support of a pain clinic and encouraged them to request a pain management consult.



“It feels like strep throat but 100 times worse. It feels like the left side of my tongue has been sliced off.”
- Accordant member

Continued Support on the Path to Wellness

The Accordant nurse continued to support this member, who had seen a pain specialist and was started on a combination of pain medications and muscle relaxers, in addition to a fentanyl patch, which the member had declined to use so far. The member also had a lidocaine rinse to help with pain during eating and drinking. The member acknowledged persistent fears about the use of pain medication. The Accordant nurse continued to have ongoing discussions with the member about the benefits of pain management, particularly the fentanyl patch, versus the member's fear of becoming addicted. The member's pain specialist also had several discussions with the member regarding the nerve damage to the soft palate and the possibility that the pain would be permanent and chronic. The member was desperate for additional help and reported that the pain level increased to around 9 out of 10 when eating certain foods, like those that are acidic, spicy, or crunchy.

The member also had significant tooth decay as a result of oral radiation and needed dental extraction. The procedure had initially been denied by the health plan, so the Accordant nurse advocated for this member by contacting the health plan to determine what documentation could be submitted to assist with approval for this procedure. The health plan representative explained that the oncologist and the neurologist could write a short summary of the reason this member would benefit from extraction of teeth. The Accordant nurse followed up with both providers, the information was submitted, and the procedure was approved.

The member had extraction of all teeth and was fitted for temporary dentures. Permanent dentures would be placed once the gums healed. The member was also given an antibiotic rinse to help prevent infection. Following this procedure, the member tried again to reduce pain medications and reported tongue pain of a 5 on a scale of 0 to 10. The Accordant nurse again provided education to the member on the importance of using pain medications as needed. **The nurse also continued to suggest additional therapeutic options to the member, such as Hyperbaric Oxygen Therapy, which was approved by the member's health plan and ultimately facilitated healing of the ulcerations in the member's throat.**

Looking Ahead and Finding Hope

The member continued to have discussions with the Accordant nurse, which now focused on long-term coping strategies. The member was on a stable pain management regimen and had the option to add an additional pain medication if needed. The member reported taking the pain medications as prescribed.

The member was optimistic and reported no additional weight loss, plus improved sleep of roughly 8 to 10 hours nightly. The extensive education and encouragement by the Accordant nurse helped this member on the journey to recovery and offered reassurance that the member never had to go through this alone. Our members are our priority and we will meet them where they are and support them every step of the way.

Accessible Medical Expertise and Education

Approximately 85% of PD (Parkinson's disease) patients report pain as a troubling symptom.¹ There are many potential causes of this pain, including the common reasons for pain and some that may be related to PD, such as tremor and rigidity, as well as neuropathic conditions. Since chronic pain can worsen other aspects of member health, reduce medication compliance, and impact quality of life, early treatment is important. Accordant's Care Management nurses offer expert knowledge to access resources for our members that provide specialized care and support, which results in improved health outcomes.

Members find Accordant nurses to be a valuable asset because of their extensive knowledge of chronic diseases, like PD. Recently, an Accordant nurse used this knowledge to improve the quality of care for a member, who called to request help scheduling physical therapy. The member had reported back pain to the doctor and had been given an order for physical therapy.

The Accordant nurse knew that pain was often reported in PD patients and worked to find a clinician with training to manage pain with PD. This would allow the member to get more specialized care than through a routine physical therapy program. A therapist was located approximately 70 miles from the member, which was closer than the commute to the member's neurologist. The nurse reviewed this information with the member and received permission to contact the therapist. The nurse advised the therapist of the potential commute for the member and the therapist offered to customize a program for the member with home exercises that could be managed by a provider closer to the member. After contacting the plan to confirm the visit would be covered under the member's benefits, the nurse called the member back to relay this information and provide education about additional changes to voice and swallowing that could be caused by PD. The nurse encouraged the member to speak with the therapist about the program and how it may be helpful.

The member was extremely grateful for the in-depth knowledge and personal support provided by the Accordant nurse. The prospect of starting physical therapy to help with the debilitating effects of PD offered this member hope and encouragement.

The member expressed sincere thanks for the support from the Accordant program and the time the nurse spent researching and coordinating the upcoming visit.

The nurse knew that having access to a specially trained therapist would not only assist this member immediately with the back pain, but could also continue to be a resource for the member in the future should speaking or swallowing difficulties arise.



1. Source: Wertheimer PJ. *Understanding Chronic Pain*. National Parkinson's Foundation; 2012. http://www.pdf.org/winter12_understanding_pain_pd. Accessed April 10, 2014.

Expert Care and Education Makes a Difference

It can be difficult to manage a complex illness, like PD (Parkinson's disease), which can involve a variety of symptoms and complications. For many members, a new sign or problem can be enough to significantly impact quality of life. However, the Accordant Care Management program provides multiple layers of support to help ensure members can identify and address problems quickly, while also having accessible medical expertise and nurse education to put them on the path to wellness and better health outcomes.



Recently, a conversation with the Accordant nurse improved health outcomes for one member with PD.

The member had reported recent fainting spells and has a history of hypotension (low blood pressure). Fainting spells puts the member at increased risks for falls, injury, or event hospitalization. The member's PCP (primary care physician) had encouraged the member to continue eating a high-salt diet. The member reported that failing to consume five to six teaspoons of salt daily resulted in leg cramps and weakness.

A referral was obtained for a second opinion by the Accordant program's Medical Director to offer any additional insight into this problem. The Medical Director review offered a holistic approach to this member's health, reviewing not only current medications and past medical history, but other information relevant to this case. The review resulted in several important recommendations: first, that low blood pressure could be caused or worsened by ropinerole (a PD medication) and that a medication review by the neurologist may be beneficial. Second, the Medical Director stressed the importance of adequate salt intake and hydration, as well as keeping a diary of the circumstances surrounding the fainting spells, which would help the member's health care team have a better understanding of the context. The context for fainting could be an important clue for appropriate interventions. For example, if fainting was associated with a large meal, a change to the timing of the PD medication could help. The Medical Director also recommended safety precautions this member should take, such as getting up slowly from seated positions to prevent falls.

The Accordant nurse reviewed the Medical Director's recommendations with the member and they discussed additional steps the member could take. The member's spouse has been helping pack water for adequate hydration on trips. The nurse also educated the member on the importance of consuming table salt or salty foods to increase salt intake. **The member was extremely happy to discuss other options.** There seemed to be a noticeable decline in symptoms and fainting or hypotension since trying these interventions. As a result, the member has better quality of life and is safer and less likely to fall, as well.

Case Management Post-Discharge Care

Case Management services are an important aspect of the Accordant Care Management Program. Not only do these services significantly impact member health outcomes and boost member satisfaction, the care coordination can prove a very valuable tool for ensuring effective collaboration and satisfaction among the providers involved in a member's care.

Recently, a member with RA (rheumatoid arthritis) revealed during a hospital discharge follow-up phone call that needed therapy had not yet been started because of a delay in approval by the health plan.

The member had recently undergone two emergency surgeries for compartment syndrome and required occupational therapy to improve movement and feeling in the right hand. While the physician had ordered this, it had been over one week since the surgery, and the member had been working with the home health agency, the physician, and the therapy provider to resolve the issue with no success.

The therapy provider had told the member and the home health agency that the services were not covered by the member's health plan. During the call with the Accordant nurse, the member requested assistance to resolve this issue and expressed concern over a possible setback in recovery due to the delay in receiving therapy.



The Accordant nurse recognized that this was an urgent issue and started by contacting the health plan to confirm the member's coverage for physical therapy.

A call was placed to the home health agency, who had been handling the contact with the physical therapy provider. The Accordant nurse relayed the conversation with the health plan and discussed the member's case. The home health agency explained that the initial order had been written for the member to receive in-home occupational therapy support; however, it was determined that the services the member required could not be done at home. Therefore, the member had only been evaluated and still needed to go to physical therapy. During the call with the member, the Accordant nurse confirmed the member's understanding of this and the member reported being willing to go in to receive therapy services.

The Accordant nurse contacted the referral coordinator for the occupational therapy provider to discuss the steps for obtaining authorization for this member. During the course of the call, it was discovered that the referral coordinator had been requesting authorizations for in-home visits, though the member was not approved for (and did not want) in-home visits. The Accordant nurse provided the referral coordinator with the correct information, as well as the number for the health plan, and requested that the request for authorization be resubmitted.

The Accordant nurse also contacted the member's referring physician to provide an update on the delay in receiving therapy and assurance that the correct information had been distributed to both the home health agency and the occupational therapy provider. The physician's staff was extremely pleased with the care coordination provided by the nurse on the member's behalf.

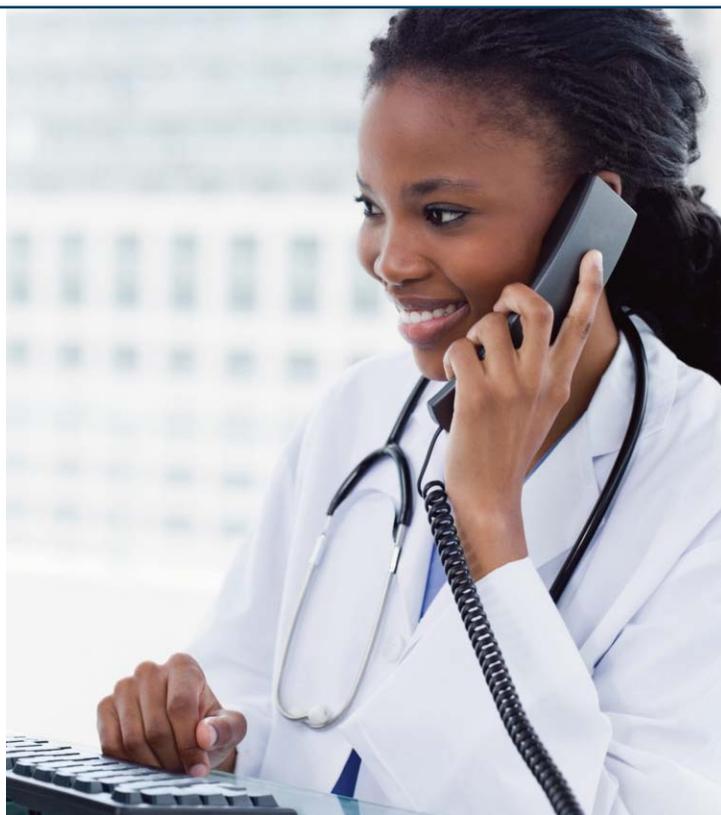
It was critical that this member begin occupational therapy as soon as possible to recover use of the right hand and wrist and promote healing following surgery. This would also help ensure that the member did not experience any complications following surgery. A follow-up call was scheduled with the member to ensure that therapy started without any further delay, and the Accordant nurse requested that the referral coordinator call back to confirm once authorization for services had been obtained. **This care coordination involved multiple phone calls and follow-ups with the providers involved with this member's care, but ultimately resulted in the timely provision of services that were vital to this member's healing.**

During the follow-up call, the member confirmed having started occupational therapy and said, "My physician was so pleased and very appreciative of all your hard work to help me get therapy and they said they have never worked with a friendlier person from the health plan."

The Accordant nurse was aware that sometimes additional communication and collaboration is needed when multiple providers are involved in member care. Things can easily be overlooked or communicated incorrectly without someone to provide care coordination and ensure seamless provision of services. That is Accordant's strength; each day we work exceptionally hard to ensure that members have the needed resources and support to effectively manage their care and live well. For this member, the care coordination directly improved the member's health outcomes, increased effective utilization of services, and prevented complications or the need for hospitalization or additional trips to the physician or the emergency room.

Critical Support at the Right Time

Accordant's nurses build relationships with members that are designed to optimize whole-person wellness and identify critical care support during times of crisis. It's this support that can make the difference between markedly worsened health outcomes or success on the path to wellness and improved health.



Some of the most important relationships are built over time and during episodes of acute crisis or illness. **Accordant nurses are committed to providing whole-person support and care coordination.** This often occurs over months or years during multiple phone calls with members, as well as the supporting health care team, with the singular goal of improving member wellness and health outcomes. For one member with MS (multiple sclerosis), the relationship with the Accordant nurse proved to be a critical lifeline during a time of health crisis.

During a routine call to the member, it was discovered that the member did not have adequate access to catheterization or transfers from bed to wheelchair, because the member's spouse, who was the primary caregiver, had been hospitalized emergently. The member had no additional support at that time. The member had requested home health support during a previous call, and the nurse had used the health plan's benefit line to verify the member's eligibility and coordinated with the member's PCP (primary care physician) to get the process started. However, when the PCP had called, the member had declined home health service. Loss of independence can be a challenge for many members, and it can be difficult to accept outside support. The Accordant nurse knew that this member had relied solely on the spouse for support. Now that the spouse was hospitalized, the situation had become dire.

The Accordant nurse immediately contacted the member's PCP to advocate for this member and communicate the important health issue they could be facing if a UTI (urinary tract infection) or skin breakdown developed. Either of these issues could exacerbate a flare of the member's MS and could be life-threatening if untreated. The PCP's office agreed to coordinate having a home health nurse visit the member for evaluation.

As a result of the home health assessment, the member was admitted to the hospital with a UTI and multiple abrasions and tears on the skin, plus a large open sacral wound. The member was also started on anticoagulants for a suspected venous blood clot. **The Accordant nurse contacted the clinical nurse supervisor to request a care plan as part of this member's discharge** and to relay the series of events that likely resulted in hospitalization for this member. The clinical nurse supervisor was grateful for the call and noted that the member was septic upon admission and was thankful for the quick actions to assess the member's health. If the Accordant nurse had not acted so quickly, this member could have suffered markedly worsened health outcomes.

On the day after discharge, the Accordant nurse contacted the member at home to review discharge instructions and assess the member's progress with wound care and resolution of the UTI. Education was provided to the member on the importance of adhering to the discharge plan, including daily wound care and catheterizations. **The member was off antibiotics at the time of the call and reported no signs or symptoms of a UTI. The member's spouse, who was also back home from the hospital, reported that the member's wounds were healing.** Together, the Accordant nurse and the member's spouse discussed the importance of a back-up plan for this member's care to prevent this situation from recurring. The member's spouse agreed they would contact the doctor to arrange in advance any home health that might be needed. The nurse scheduled a follow-up call for one week out to continue monitoring the member's recovery.

During the follow-up call, the member reported that all open wounds had closed and healed completely. The member was vigilant about adhering to daily transfers and catheterizations to prevent recurring skin breakdown or UTIs.

The member expressed extreme gratitude for the quick action by the Accordant nurse to recognize this dire situation and coordinate care to improve health outcomes and ensure the member received prompt treatment and support.

Helping Members Prepare for Surgery

Preparing for surgery can be daunting for anyone, particularly members who may be managing a long-term illness and other comorbidities. There can be concerns about recovery or disease flares. Many members worry about when—or even whether—to take their medications. And sometimes, members simply do not have enough information about how to prepare for surgery. Accordant's Care Management nurses understand these concerns and we can help our members get the answers they need. That's why we contact members prior to surgery to answer questions, review treatment plans, and provide support or education, if needed. We know that when members are educated and prepared for surgery, they stand a far better chance of avoiding post-operative complications.

Recently, the pre-operative education provided by the Accordant nurse helped a member with RA (rheumatoid arthritis) to be better prepared for an upcoming surgery. During the assessment, the member reported a scheduled cholecystectomy to remove the gallbladder and gallstones. The member was receiving adalimumab injections every other week and methotrexate weekly and was unaware of the importance of discussing the RA treatment plan with the rheumatologist prior to surgery. The surgeon did not inform the patient of any special concerns with the RA medications.

The Accordant nurse recognized an opportunity for additional education to ensure this member's safety and wellbeing before and after surgery. Preventing infections or other complications after surgery is essential, not only for the member's wellbeing and quality of life, but also because it is one of the most costly drivers of utilization during the post-operative period. **The member was advised about the possible increased risk of infection, and impact on healing with some DMARDs (disease-modifying anti-rheumatic drugs), like those the member was taking. The member was encouraged to contact the rheumatologist about the upcoming surgery and discuss the appropriateness of a change to the medication protocol.** The Accordant nurse scheduled a follow-up call to offer additional support and determine what the member discussed with the rheumatologist.

During the follow-up call, the member reported having talked with the rheumatologist about the upcoming surgery. The member was extremely thankful for the education and support, saying, **"I love talking with you, because you give me good ideas."**

According to the member, the rheumatologist advised that methotrexate should not be taken one week before or after surgery and the adalimumab should be stopped and the next two doses should be skipped (for a total of five weeks without adalimumab). The Accordant nurse also talked with the member during the week after surgery and provided education on the signs and symptoms of a post-operative infection. **At the time of the call, the member reported no fever or signs of infection and felt the incision was healing nicely.** The member had resumed normal activities, like driving, and reported pain of 0 on a scale of 0 to 10. The education and support provided by the nurse undoubtedly helped this member lower their potential for a post-operative infection and recover more quickly without any complications.

Putting Rare Conditions into Perspective

Of those individuals with a rare condition ¹ :		
In a given year, 1 out of 3 will have an Inpatient Admission and 1 out of 2 will visit the Emergency Room .	1 out of 4 is taking Specialty Medications (high use of IV/ injectables).	3 out of 4 have a Comorbidity .

Patients with rare conditions face multiple challenges. Traditional care management is reactive and episodic. Their conditions tend to progress and become more expensive over time. There isn't an abundance of condition-specific education and it's generally limited and difficult to understand. Physicians caring for complex cases often do not have enough time to consistently address all of the patient's needs. As a result, these patients become high utilizers of the Emergency Room and frequently become hospitalized due to complications.

Preventing those predictable and costly complications is one of Accordant's primary objectives. Our goal is to help members avoid a near-term re-admission due to complications, misunderstood discharge plans, or difficulty following the treatment plan. Members engaged with Accordant nurses report fewer episodes of disease-related problems, leading to improved utilization outcomes and reduced costs for the payer. In fact, Accordant-contacted members had a 44% decrease in re-admission rates compared to those who were not contacted.²

Additionally, Accordant's nurses have the support of an integrated pharmacy relationship with CVS Health. This deeply impacts the program's ability to successfully optimize member care through multiple channels. Let us help you maximize your member's health outcomes. Talk to your Accordant Account Executive today.

Accordant Health Services

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1. Source: Accordant Data Warehouse, All Medical and Pharmacy Claims Incurred through 12/31/12

2. Based on 2014/2015 client discharge notifications

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