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When should an Attendant Care Assessment be Conducted?

As soon as possible! As soon as it is identified that a client needs (or needed) personal care assistance, an Attendant Care Assessment should be conducted. Examples of situations include:

- ***When healthcare professional(s) observe the need for personal care assistance:***

It is crucial for the healthcare professional(s) to document this need as soon as possible during the rehabilitation process, even if the client is still in hospital. For example, hospital nursing notes stating “assisted with bath” indicate a need for attendant care. Insurance companies may question why they are being requested to fund attendant care when a client is still in hospital, as all needs should be met by OHIP. In extreme cases like catastrophic injuries, the need for personal care assistance may be greater than in-hospital staff can provide. The risk of pressure sores, inappropriate behaviour, and safety risks may warrant funding of additional care.

- ***When family members have already been providing care at home:***

In most cases, family members have already been providing the required attendant care activities on their own. Again, attendant care must be assessed as soon as possible in order to most accurately document the client’s needs. This creates a win-win-win situation with the client receiving the required care, the family receiving quicker access to benefits, and the insurer being able to assist the client to purchase necessary care, reducing the stress on both the client and family.

- ***When a retroactive claim is submitted:***

In the case where the client doesn’t immediately make a claim for benefits, but makes a retroactive claim, the client should still be assessed as soon as possible. Based on medical reports and the client report, a trained healthcare professional is able to make an accurate determination of the attendant care needs immediately post injury and project up until the time of the assessment. For example, if immediately post injury, the client required six hours of attendant care assistance each day and now, six months later, the client only requires one hour each day, a reasonable progression is a decrease of one hour daily each month.

In all cases, whether the care needed is professional nursing care (and may be funded by med-rehab dollars) or non professional care i.e. family, health care aide etc. (and may be funded by attendant care dollars) is case specific and can depend on diagnosis, access to attendants, environment, and many other factors.

Please refer to The Canadian Independent Adjuster June 2002 issue for the full article.

For further information on Attendant Care Assessment, feel free to contact Sibley & Associates at 1-800-363-8900.