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Texas-Based Partnership Looks to Transform the Way Surgery is Performed

By partnering with employers, ACAP Healthworks and Goldfinch are improving recovery time and reducing opioid use.

BY [WILL MADDOX](#) PUBLISHED IN [HEALTHCARE BUSINESS](#) SEPTEMBER 4, 2020 11:00 AM

A Texas-based partnership is working on transforming the surgery process and helping employers make sure their employees get the best and most efficient care. Dallas-based solutions provider ACAP Healthworks has partnered with Goldfinch health to improve surgery care by reducing opioid use and surgical complications while making the surgery experience more enjoyable.

Austin-based Goldfinch connects with employers to guide employees through the surgery process, working with insurance networks to improve the experience. On average, Goldfinch gets employees back to work 34 days faster and uses half as many opioids after surgery compared to the national average. Not only does this improve the

quality of life for patients, but it also helps employers get their workers back on the job quicker.

ACAP Healthworks began working with employers to decrease the impact of diabetes but has expanded to address other issues, partnering with organizations like Goldfinch to improve health and reduce healthcare costs. “Employers are looking for creative and innovative ways to form a relationship to expand employer-sponsored healthcare,” says Wally Gomaa, CEO of ACAP Healthworks. “Goldfinch Health’s strategy aligns perfectly with our mission to improve the quality of care for patients while reducing the overall cost for employers.”

How do they do it? The gains come from a combination of expertise and care coordination. Goldfinch advocates for employees before surgery and looks for providers who use a process called Enhanced Recovery After Surgery ([ERAS](#)). This process calls for a few changes to the surgery process that improve recovery. According to Goldfinch CEO Brand Mewland, the process isn’t as widely adopted as one might think given the results. He hopes to shine a light on providers who follow ERAS to build demand for it.

“For most, surgery is intimidating and anxiety-inducing, despite the best efforts of physicians, nurses, and staff,” said Brand Newland, CEO and co-founder of Goldfinch Health via release. “You end up feeling alone going into the operation and alone during what can be a nerve-wracking recovery. We founded Goldfinch to help people find the best experience possible in surgery—supported by the most advanced research, guided by caring and compassionate Nurse Navigators, and targeted toward helping folks get back to life as soon as possible.”

ERAS advocates for a [few changes](#) to the surgery process, as many probably know it. Most patients are told not to eat or drink up to 12 hours for the surgery, meaning a patient must wake up hungry and thirsty and gut it out until the operation. ERAS says patients recover better when they have food six hours before surgery and carbohydrate-rich beverages up to two hours before surgery.

The process also says that non-opioid painkillers can be given before the surgery begins to treat the pain preemptively, improve recovery, and avoid opioids after the operation. The care coordination piece assigns the patient a nurse that helps them understand the surgery, the new rules about eating and drinking and answer any questions they have about the process. They also follow up with patients to make sure recovery and rehabilitation are progressing.

“These different measures, shorten hospital stay, decrease narcotic use, improve the pain, expedite the return to function after surgery,” says Dr. John Uecker, associate

professor chief of innovation and entrepreneurship division, chief minimally invasive surgery department of surgery and perioperative care at The University of Texas at Austin Dell Medical School. Uecker says that for colon surgeries, the recovery often included a seven to a ten-day hospital stay. With ERAS and other minimally invasive strategies, patients today often go home the same day. “It’s a win-win for everybody.”

Employer’s are starting to catch on as well. At St. Louis-based manufacturing firm Hager Companies, they are always looking for a way to get employees back to work quickly and effectively. The company appreciates the nurse navigation and high touch relationship provided to the employees. We met with them, and they had a very different concept,” says Lisa Filkins, senior vice president of human resources and talent development at Hager Companies. “They are proactive and reach out before our employee says they have to have surgery. It is a proactive way to reduce healthcare spend overall and do it in a caring, kind manner that takes care of the employees.