Several of us in the workers' comp blogosphere have lamented that the industry has lacked, and could truly benefit from, a claims history database offering clear, anonymized data from multiple operations; provided in a useful platform that would allow us to truly gauge and improve our effectiveness as an industry.

Lament no more. That system is here, and it is the brilliant brainchild of the people at Safety National and their subsidiary, Insurance Data Services (IDS). Last month they released CompMark, a multi-contributor claims history database that is revolutionary in its concept and implementation. The result of over 3 1/2 years of effort involving multiple TPA's and claims operations, the company now offers a clear benchmarking tool for self insured and high deductible claims across the industry.

The Mission Statement of IDS states its purpose clearly. It is:

_To collect, normalize and report on self-insured and large deductible claim data so that third party administrators and their clients have a method to compare their results against the entire participating market._

According to the company, "Nearly 50 percent of American workers are covered by self-insured or deductible workers' compensation programs, yet no quality benchmarking data source exists for Third Party Administrators and employers to compare their claim costs against their peers." They are absolutely correct, and it appears they have come up with a solution that will definitely fill the void.

I recently had the opportunity to see this system in action, thanks to a demo provided by Safety National's Carl Reynolds, Senior Vice President of Claims, Christie Smith, Corporate Communications Manager and Kathy Williamson, Membership Services Coordinator for IDS. The interface is well thought out and easy to navigate. The ability to "drill down" to very specific injury and demographic scenarios is impressive. Indeed, reports generated through IDS can be pulled from various criteria, including claim date range (status and type), National Council on Compensation Insurance (NCCI) class code, state, claimant age and gender, body part and loss cause. Members can use the reports to benchmark against their peers, as well as measure the effectiveness of their cost control measures. This is a tool that can really allow the industry to both gauge and improve the performance across multiple levels.

The company also hopes to one day expand the service to enable it to identify cost drivers and utilize predictive analytics to improve their member's workers' compensation programs. It should also be noted that no specific claimant data or identifying info is used in the CompMark system. All identifying features have been excluded from the data set.

Reynolds indicated that there are over 7.5 million records currently in the system, and that they have multiple data partners in this effort. I can assure you this was no small task. Historically companies have kept this type of information very close to their chest, and data in this industry lacks a clear defining criterion. Companies use widely disparate systems, which classifies and
manages that data in different and at times incompatible ways.

Successfully integrating their data was only part of the challenge they faced; actually getting multiple players on board is a significant achievement in its own right. The end result is impressive, not just for the way it is presented, but the potential it holds for the industry. Information is power, and good information used properly can empower us all. This cooperative effort amongst varied entities is an outstanding step in improving process and outcomes for everyone.

IDS CompMark is a winner. A winner that the industry should pay attention to.

More information on CompMark may be found at the Safety National website, http://www.safetynational.com, or in the corporate brochure available in the attachments box to the right.