

Provider Champion: Ohio RETAIN Helps Patients ‘Get Back to Enjoying Life to the Fullest’

Winter 2023 RETAIN Success Story

Ohio RETAIN offers services to help people with an injury or illness stay at work or return to work (SAW/RTW). The program is strengthened by champions like Dr. Mohamed Dahman, a bariatric surgeon at Mercy Health. He refers his patients to RETAIN because he believes it helps reduce their worries about work and lets them focus on recovery.

“Having patients complete the program and successfully get back to work is just amazing,” he said. “Because ultimately, that’s what we’re trying to do. We’re trying to help them get back to enjoying life to the fullest.”

Like all RETAIN providers, Dr. Dahman discusses the program with patients who qualify, answers their questions, and works with the RETAIN team to coordinate care and services. As a champion of the program, he goes a step further to encourage them to enroll and takes a more active role in the patient’s RETAIN journey than a typical provider. He is one of a few providers who talks directly to the RETAIN team, asking questions about what each of his patients might need and how he can better support them.

Background

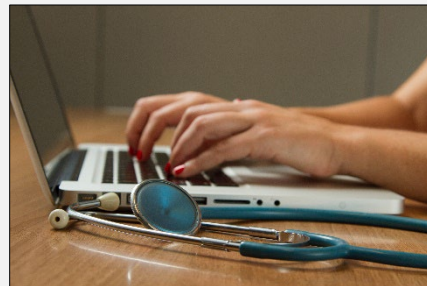
When Ohio RETAIN asked Dr. Dahman to join the program, he was immediately interested because of the offer to help his patients with non-medical issues.

“It’s not only the medical things they have to deal with,” he said. “They also have to deal with being off work and getting back to work. How are they going to be able to juggle those things? So, for me, it was a no-brainer.”



Challenge-Action-Results

Challenge: Without a strong advocate, people who could benefit from RETAIN services might shy away from the program or never learn about it at all.



Action: Ohio RETAIN partnered with Dr. Dahman to help him better support his patients. He champions the program with his patients and helps them decide whether to enroll.

Results: More than 160 of the patients Dr. Dahman has referred have been eligible for the program, and he has seen his patients benefit from the additional services.

Challenge

Patients might hesitate to enroll in RETAIN because they are unaware of the services that the program offers, do not understand its benefits, or are wary of promises they think cannot be fulfilled. Having someone they trust, like their provider, “champion” the program may help patients overcome those barriers.

Actions

Recruit champions to help respond to patient concerns. Although Dr. Dahman understood the potential benefits of RETAIN services for his patients, he was still unsure about joining. Many programs designed to help patients ultimately add a lot of red tape and few benefits.

However, the Ohio RETAIN team showed Dr. Dahman that the process is seamless for providers and helpful for participants. He was impressed by how well the program worked.

“I honestly have not felt that this has impacted me in any negative way,” he said. “It takes a few minutes here and there, but the huge benefit for the patients was definitely very pronounced, and very evident just over the past few months.”

Help participants focus on recovery. Dr. Dahman said his practice focuses entirely on medical interventions. He noticed his patients also worry about going back to work.

Ohio RETAIN provides a structured approach to helping his patients navigate things like Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA) paperwork, job accommodations, retraining, and more. This helps his patients worry less about getting back to work and focus on recovery.

“We’re not just medically helping them,” he said. “We’re medically, emotionally, and mentally helping them as well.”

Get participants safely back to work. When patients seem reluctant to enroll, Dr. Dahman discusses the benefits and services Ohio RETAIN can provide. Work can be an important part of their recovery. When patients get back to work, they also can get back independence they might have lost because of their condition.

“They want to work, and when we give them the tools to reintegrate them back into society, they jump on it,” Dr. Dahman said. “They want to do it.”

RESULTS AND KEY TAKEAWAYS

Of the patients Dr. Dahman has referred, more than 160 have been eligible for Ohio RETAIN. Both the program and Dr. Dahman have learned the following lessons during their partnership:

- **The value of treating the whole patient.** Offering SAW/RTW services alongside medical support helps participants improve their lives.

“A lot of our patients want to become independent,” Dr. Dahman said. “Not just independent physically, but also independent financially. They want to continue to enjoy life the way they want to enjoy it.”

- **The benefits of champions.** Both the program and the provider gain something from the partnership. Ohio RETAIN has enjoyed increased enrollment thanks to its providers, but Dr. Dahman said seeing his patients get extra help for SAW/RTW adds value for his practice as well. He encourages every physician to offer resources like RETAIN to their patients.

“It’s so streamlined and efficient,” he said about the Ohio RETAIN program. “It has been great how happy the patients have been.”



Ohio is participating in RETAIN (Retaining Employment and Talent After Injury/Illness Network) to build connections and improve coordination among employers, health care providers, and other key parties to help workers who are newly injured and ill stay in the workforce. The Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS), in coordination with several partners, leads Ohio RETAIN. The U.S. Department of Labor, in collaboration with the Social Security Administration, sponsors RETAIN.

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