

WorkPoint

Workplace Safety, Injury & Wellness News



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Welcome to WorkPoint

This is the first publication of our newsletter designed for employers to help keep your workforce safe, injury-free and well for a fully productive day.

We hope you enjoy the articles from the various contributors at HealthPoint Plaza. The articles will cover a wide variety of topics that we hope will be useful with your workforce. Look for our next edition in the fall. Until then, have a safe and healthy summer.

***Combat unnecessary costs
with appropriate and timely
medical support for you
and your employees.***

Prevent Heat Stress Illness

Kaye Hood, R.N.

Summer is coming and so is the heat. Care needs to be taken to prevent employees from having a heat-related illness. When the body's core temperature (98.6) exceeds its norm, it becomes harder to cool down. A person can lose 2-3 gallons of fluid through sweat. If the fluids and electrolytes are not replaced, they can develop heat cramps, heat exhaustion, or heat stroke which is a medical emergency. Per NIOSH, workers in hot environments should drink 5-7 ounces of fluids every 15-20 minutes to replace fluids lost. If a person becomes thirsty, he/she is already dehydrated. Keeping up on fluid intake and refraining from alcohol and caffeine will help prevent dehydration.

Effective Work-Related Injury Analysis

Thomas Marsh, M.D., M.P.H.,

Board Certified Occupational Medicine

A complete and detailed work injury/exposure review is an essential element of a work-related investigation. The first interview and history are critical to understand the sequence of events surrounding the onset of injury or symptoms at work.

A Board Certified Occupational Medicine Physician has the expertise for getting a detailed review of accidents, exposures, and disease outbreaks by using scientific methods. He or she has a broad, analytical, un-biased approach that is absolutely essential to consider all the factors, human and job, that could affect the case.

Accidents typically have a root cause. The challenge is to discover the likely source to help reduce risk of future injury and improve safety. Health



complaints can occur at work from a worker's own medical conditions so personal factors, whether other jobs, pre-existing medical disease, hobbies, crafts or sports, must also be factored into the assessment. A video of the job can provide a significant insight and help validate a job description of work exposures/risks.

Expect complete attention to details from your medical advisor. Their broad capabilities often provide an expanded view of the cause of injury or illness. This will help your company use their resources effectively.

**Occupational Medicine Clinic of Southeast Missouri Hospital
2126 Independence St. Cape Girardeau, MO 63703
Phone: 573-986-4404 Fax: 573-986-4439**

Effective Worker's Compensation Strategies

Todd Wasiliewski, P.T., Cert. M.D.T.

It takes strategic planning to limit rising workers' compensation costs. Here are some ways to control costs and build a top-notch workers' compensation program at the same time.

1. Keep employees healthy.

Healthy employees are less likely to file for worker's compensation benefits. One strategy is to offer a health insurance plan that provides annual physical and low cost coverage that encourages employees to get necessary medical care.

2. Prevent workplace injuries.

Preventing claims is always the most effective strategy. A sound strategy is to evaluate the largest number of injuries and focus on the prevention of these injuries by addressing safety, ergonomics, repetitive motion, etc.

3. Keep employees happy.

Good labor relations are crucial. The worker's compensation experience is always worse in work environments where there is a lot of labor-management tension.

4. Promote early claim reporting.

Frontline managers need to know how to handle a work-related injury or illness. They should be trained to contact the proper personnel, ensuring that claims are handled as quickly as possible.

5. Manage medically.

An employer should work with medical providers to develop treatment guidelines for injured employees. This will ensure that injured employees will receive the same quality of care, regardless of their medical provider, so they can return to work as quickly as possible.

6. Establish a return-to-work program.

Institute a return-to-work program in which employees stay at work while getting the medical attention they need. For example, an employer could help an employee with carpal tunnel syndrome by setting surgery on a Friday afternoon, arranging transportation, and getting the employee back to work, with restrictions, on Monday morning.

7. Create a disability management culture.

Employers need to change their attitudes about disability. Disability is negotiable, thus what should determine employee disability is not the medical provider, but the employer's willingness to adapt to the restrictions or limitations of an injured employee.

Delayed Injury Reporting Compromises Health & Safety

Thomas Marsh, M.D., M.P.H.,

Board Certified Occupational Medicine

Immediate medical care and safety investigation for suspected on-the-job injuries or exposures are critical to worker health and safety.

Delays in initiating such essential activities complicates the healing process, can create further injury and may increase the disability. Often a condition which could have been conservatively managed with

reasonable success if treated early could now require surgery due to the length of non-treatment with ongoing aggravation at home and work. Also, other workers may sustain similar injuries if hazards are not eliminated by a safety investigation.

Current Worker's Compensation guidance requires a 30 day reporting of work injuries, however, many workers wait months.

Each company can set their own more stringent standards as long as each employee is aware of the need for immediate reporting. Immediate work injury reporting allows for a timely causation analysis, a safety review and completion of company required post accident drug and/or alcohol testing. Delays of even a couple of hours can compromise drug and alcohol testing.



Did You Know?

Recent studies show smoking is the leading cause of premature death. And smoking costs more than cash. It can affect your health and the health of others around you. It can also increase health care costs. That could mean that a lot of money is going up in smoke.

Health plans or direct company coverage of smoking cessation can be cost-effective by decreasing related negative health effects.

Chantix plus counseling has been shown to be more effective than Wellbutrin in both short and long term smoking cessation.



EASE- Employer Assisted Smoking Elimination

Debbie Leoni, M.S.A., R.N.

Interested in offering a smoking cessation class at your workplace? the EASE program consists of a series of seven, 30-minute classes that are arranged around the company's work schedule, employee rotations and various work locations. And it's all free to you!

Southeast Missouri Hospital has received a grant from the Missouri Foundation for Health to offer tobacco cessation programs in the businesses of Southeast Missouri. The EASE program, created by the American Lung Association, is a behavior modification program which encourages "prepared cold turkey," but also works well in conjunction with nicotine replacement therapy.

Participants are guided to identify their triggers, deal with challenges, and find support while our staff supply accountability. A moderate amount of funds for nicotine replacement products is included in the grant.

Classes are being schedule through December 2008. Call 573-986-4404 for more information.



Smoking Related to Rheumatoid Arthritis

Thomas Marsh, M.D., M.P.H.,

Board Certified Occupational Medicine

Current and recent past smokers have a known high-risk association with Rheumatoid Arthritis. There is a progressive increase in Rheumatoid Arthritis associated with the number of cigarettes smoked per day and the number of years a person smoked. New studies suggest there is a gene, when combined with smoking, that could trigger arthritis.

Employers may want to consider smoking cessation programs for their employees because arthritis is a common co-factor with many conditions, which the worker believes to be work-related. Eliminating smoking may help reduce work comp claims by having healthier employees.



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A Case In Point:

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A factory assembly worker presented with a tender spot on the right forearm. There was no direct trauma or obvious injury. The complaint was investigated by five physicians, two of which were orthopedists. X-rays, MRI and a biopsy were all negative. Over one year following onset, the worker contacted a neurosurgeon. This specialist believed a stated neck problem and numbness on the opposite arm was work related and recommended surgery. There was no evidence of any neck work injury documented by the previous five physicians.

The history presented by the worker to the neurosurgeon was opposite from what the records showed. The company did not identify this inaccurate history and changed presentation. After the neck surgery, continued arm problems resulted in surgery on both wrist and elbow. The company covered the cost for all of the surgeries.

Moral of the story: Before accepting a "work injury complaint" all medical records and health histories should be reviewed for variances and if warranted, a second opinion should be obtained.

New Interest in Omega 3-Fatty Acids

Mary Etta Dunaway, R.D., L.D., C.D.E.

Recent research has reaffirmed that fish is an important part of a healthy diet for all Americas, including women who are pregnant and young children. The health benefits of salmon and tuna far exceed the potential risks caused by trace amounts of contaminants present in all fish, namely, mercury. Fish to limit are shark, swordfish, king mackerel and tilefish.

The American Heart Association encourages at least two servings a week of fish which can reduce the risk of heart disease, stroke, and even diabetes. When coupled with weight loss and physical activity, the omega 3-fatty acids slow progression of glucose intolerance to full-blown type 2 diabetes. Omega 3-fatty acids work wonders by lowering triglycerides, lowering blood pressure, preventing blood clots and raising good cholesterol (HDL).

Additional findings believe Omega 3-fatty acids can curb or prevent cognitive decline, dementia, depression, asthma and inflammatory disorders. Fish is naturally low in fat and calories and high in protein, zinc and magnesium. It is easy and quick to prepare. Good cooking methods include grilling, baking and broiling. However, deep frying does not qualify as healthy.

An Ounce of Prevention AND a Pound of Cure

The Occupational Medicine Clinic of Southeast Missouri Hospital is conveniently located at HealthPoint Plaza in Cape Girardeau.

Our occupational medicine service provides your organization with full-spectrum, risk management-focused occupational healthcare.

Our services include:

- Accurate worker's compensation injury identification and treatment
- Post-offer physical examinations
- Return-to-work physicals
- Drug screenings
- Pulmonary function and respirator fit testing
- Audiograms
- And more

For more information call the Occupational Medicine Clinic of Southeast Missouri Hospital at 573-986-4404.



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