

Welcome

..... to the second edition of our newsletter for 2004.

In this issue we discuss some of the rehab projects currently happening around the state, provide information on vocal injuries and introduce our new Snr Rehab Consultant, plus all the regular features.

If you have any feedback or articles you wish to contribute, please contact Jerome Paige on 3237 0316.



What's New in Rehab?

Corporate Data Warehouse

Enhancements have been made to the Corporate Data Warehouse (CDW) so that it now stores WorkCover data.

Data is received from WorkCover on a monthly basis. This data is then matched with payroll and workplace health and safety information prior to being uploaded into the CDW.

Once that data is in the CDW, reports can be produced looking at individual workplaces, districts and CSUs. Reports may provide detail on things such as injury nature and claim costs. These are designed to provide information to assist with WorkCover claim management and reduction strategies.

For privacy and confidentiality reasons only CSU Rehabilitation staff are able to access these reports. For more information contact your local Rehabilitation Consultant.

New Rehabilitation Consultant

James Keating is the new Snr Rehabilitation Consultant servicing Corinda, Ipswich and West Moreton Districts. James replaces Janette White who is now working with Mt Gravatt and Coopers Plains Districts.

James has previously worked for a private rehabilitation provider, where he specialised in vocational rehabilitation. More recently James worked with WorkCover as a Case Manager. He was also involved in a project WorkCover conducted on utilising host placements for return to work programs. James can be contacted on email james.keating@qed.qld.gov.au or ph 3280 1789.



Rehab Projects happening in Regional CSUs

There have been a number of initiatives happening throughout Queensland as a result of funds allocated through a grant from the Department of Industrial Relations. Part of the grant money has been allocated to the 5 Corporate Service Units (CSUs) outside of Brisbane to pilot a variety of reactive initiatives and proactive projects.

The aim of the reactive initiatives is to prevent or reduce the possible cost of WorkCover claims. The reactive work has consisted of the outsourcing of services such as mediation, independent investigations, OT assessments, communication skills workshops and counselling to facilitate a return to work. Some of these interventions have successfully resulted in issues being resolved before a WorkCover claim is lodged and positive feedback has been received about the availability of these services courtesy of the funding.

The proactive projects are pilot initiatives designed to reduce WorkCover costs, mainly through the prevention of injuries. If successful, the results from these pilots will be used to support budget bids for ongoing work in these areas. The proactive projects include initiatives on:

- Conflict resolution (Northern & Outback CSU)
- Prevention of voice strain (Central CSU)
- Non-violent crisis intervention (Central CSU)
- Stress prevention in special schools (Southern CSU)
- Peer support (Southern CSU)
- Wellbeing programs (Central CSU)

For more information on the non-Brisbane CSU projects or the Brisbane based Intensive Case Management program, please contact your local Rehab Consultant or Andrea Williams at Andrea.Williams@qed.qld.gov.au or on 3237 0729.

Voice Strain

Teachers are among those professionals who make great demands on their voices; they talk all day long in the classroom and have to project loud enough so that all their students can hear them clearly. Unfortunately, this strain can lead to them experiencing problems with their voice.

Voice strain is a serious medical condition affecting the vocal chords and is caused by improper or excessive use of the voice. Symptoms include hoarseness, temporary loss of voice, vocal fatigue and discomfort in the neck. Like Repetitive Strain Injury some of the symptoms of Voice Strain can be hard to reverse once the problem has progressed beyond a certain point.

Rest and time are really the only way to cure voice strain. Other recommendations for teachers with voice strain are to stop talking unless it is absolutely necessary and avoid whispering, avoid decongestants because this can dry the vocal chords and prolong irritation and if the teacher smokes, reduce or stop smoking. Additional medical treatment for these voice problems may include sessions with a speech language pathologist to provide education and instruction in proper voice techniques. Teachers may also benefit from the use of lightweight microphones and an amplifier-speaker system to reduce the ongoing strain to their vocal chords. Voice amplifiers are able to be sup-

plied by the Department. Please talk to your local Rehab Consultant for more information on this.

When developing a rehabilitation plan for a teacher with a vocal injury you should consider:

- whether the teacher needs a voice amplifier,
- providing rest periods away from a class,
- initially providing alternative duties to teaching, followed by teaching small groups before returning to teaching a full class.
- ensuring the teacher has regular sips of drinking water throughout the day as this helps with symptoms.

You may also want to discuss proactive ways the teacher can manage their class that may assist with reducing future strain on the voice. The following website by the SA Education Department provides some useful tips: http://www.decs.sa.gov.au/docs/files/communities/docman/1/Voice_Strain_Assessment_Co.pdf.



Frequently Asked Questions

Q.1. If an employee who has lodged a WorkCover claim has returned to work, do they need to continue sending medical certificates to WorkCover?

Employees still requiring some modification to their duties due to their injury, or still receiving medical treatment will still need to supply WorkCover with certificates. If they do not supply WorkCover with certificates their claim may be finalised. Always ensure you obtain a clearance medical certificate (where appropriate) as part of finalising rehabilitation.

Q.2. Why do you need a timesheet completed every week by employees who are on a graduated return to work program?

A weekly timesheet is needed to assist the Rehab Coordinator monitor the employee's progress and quickly identify if the employee is not working the hours negotiated in the return to work plan. Quickly identifying if the employee is working less than their scheduled hours will assist in minimising possible over-payments. For a WorkCover claim you are required to supply WorkCover with weekly timesheets for those employees on graduated return to work programs. These should be submitted via your CSU .

Flexliner Stools

The Northern Corporate Service Unit has recently trialled a piece of equipment called a Flexliner Stool. This stool is ideal for employees working in the Preschool or Year 1 areas. The height of the stool is very low allowing a person to sit at the same level as the students. In addition the stool has wheels which allows the user to easily slide between students.

Examples where this stool has been used with good results are:

1. A teacher with chronic fatigue syndrome used the stool to avoid having to constantly crouch, then stand. This assisted with energy conservation.
2. A Year 1 teacher used the stool as they had a back injury. The stool stopped them having to lean forward when talking to individual students.

The company that supplies these stools is called Flexliner Pty Ltd. If you would like further information on these stools contact Flexliner at their email address (chairs@flexliner.com.au) and request a catalogue.

Useful Websites to Visit

Workforce Diversity and Equity Website: <http://education.qld.gov.au/workforce/diversity/equity>

This is Education Queensland's website that provides information on diversity and equity issues, including a section which addresses issues surrounding people with a disability.

Infra Psych: <http://www.infrapsych.com>

This is an Australian website that deals with psychological injuries and their treatment. This is a particularly easy to read site.

Don't forget about the Creating Healthier Workplaces website. This has access to all past editions of the rehab review as well as all rehab forms available electronically. The address is: <http://education.qld.gov.au/health/rehab>