

Welcome

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

In this issue we introduce the manual handling for students resource package, provide information on the Reasonable Adjustment Register, examine the issue of lower back pain, introduce our new Senior Rehabilitation Consultant, plus all the

regular features.

If you have any feedback or articles you wish to contribute, please contact Renee Dawson on 3235 4030 or via Renee.Dawson@qed.qld.gov.au.



What's New in Rehab?

Reasonable Adjustment Register - 'Share Your Resources'

A Reasonable Adjustment Register is being developed to enable the sharing of equipment and aids purchased by schools/districts that are no longer in use.

If you are aware of equipment within your school/District that is not in use and you would like to see it being used to benefit others, please contact Renee Dawson, 3235 4030, Organisational Health Unit.

Further updates on how you can access the equipment register, including details of the Reasonable Adjustment policy and guidelines, can be found from the Creating Healthier Workplaces web page at <http://education.qld.gov.au/health/rehab/res-pol.html>.

New Rehabilitation Consultant

Toni Northwood is the new acting Senior Rehabilitation Consultant for the Northern CSU. Toni will be servicing the Mackay and Townsville Districts and replaces Belinda Hemmett who is now working at Roxby Downs in South Australia. Toni was previously working with Betterbodyez as Franchise Manager/Rehabilitation - Personal Trainer. Toni can be contacted on 4726 3103 or via email at Toni.Northwood@qed.qld.gov.au. Welcome Toni!!

Welcome Back Kendal

We would like to welcome back Kendal Franks to Toowoomba. For the past six months Kendal has been performing the role of PPO in Warwick District. Kendal has partly resumed his Rehabilitation Consultant role for the Southern CSU and is working part-time as the PPO for Toowoomba District. We would like to take this opportunity to thank Bev Lockrey for all her hard work while relieving for Kendal.

Manual Handling for Students Resource Package

It's finally here! The Manual Handling of Students Resource Package will be provided to all schools over the coming weeks. The resource package is in CD format and includes self paced presentations, risk management examples, record keeping templates, checklists and other resources.

Manual handling of students in our schools relates mostly to tasks where staff support students with disabilities and includes physically demanding tasks such as assisting students with daily living activities, transfers, maintaining mobility and accessing the curriculum. The package does not refer to restraint related to behaviour management issues.

The Manual Handling of Students Resource Package may be most relevant to staff supporting students with disabilities, however sections of the package on causes and prevention of injury will be useful to all staff.

Contents of the package include:

- Presentations
 - Legislation & Risk Management
 - Manual Handling & You
 - Manual Handling Techniques & Equipment
- People Handling Advisory Standards
- HS -12 Manual Handling of Policy
- Case Studies
- Resources

To view the entire content list for the package go to:

<http://education.qld.gov.au/health/healthsafety/hs-mod-manual.html>. If

you have any enquiries about the Manual Handling of Students Resource Package please contact your local Manual Handling or Senior Occupational Health and Safety Consultant. Contact details are available from the Creating Healthier Workplaces web page at <http://education.qld.gov.au/health/contacts-healthsafety.html>.



Rehabilitating Injuries to the Lower Back

Back injuries, particularly sprains & strains of the lower back, are recognised as the most frequent & some of the most severe injuries amongst workers in Australia. Injuries to the upper & lower back make up around 32% of Education Queensland's total WorkCover claims & account for 17% of our total WorkCover statutory payments.

Due to the amount of weight & impact sustained by the lower back, injuries can cause much suffering & may lead to life long disability. Pain is most commonly caused by damage to the spongy tissue, known as intervertebral discs that cushion each vertebra. When discs are squashed or rupture this places pressure on the nerves surrounding each disc, causing pain.

Factors such as constant manual handling, poor ergonomics, frequent bending of the spine & repetitive movements all provide a basis for short or long term complaint. Other factors such as an individual's strength, age, degree of fitness and previous history of back complaints will further dictate the degree of abuse the back can endure.



Possible treatment options range from basic rest, ice or heat to participation in a graduated exercise program, medication or surgery. In some cases you may wish to discuss rehabilitation options with a qualified health professional such as an Occupational Therapist, chiropractor, physiotherapist, osteopath, exercise physiologist or acupuncturist. However, always discuss any rehabilitation options with your treating GP first.

Treatment for lower back pain varies greatly and is dependent on its cause and the injury, therefore all rehabilitation options should be specific to the individual. Possible questions to ask when rehabilitating a lower back injury include:

- Is the employee able to stand or do they require seating?
- Should manual handling & lifting heavy loads be avoided?
- Will the employee require an adjustable workstation or ergonomic modifications?

Asking such questions will help to provide the basis of the rehabilitation plan & suitable duties program. OTs can also assist in conducting workplace & functional capacity assessments, which guide their recommendations on injury management strategies. To access rehabilitation services, contact your local Senior Rehabilitation Consultant.

The following websites provide some useful information on lower back pain: www.back.com; <http://www.spine->



Frequently Asked Questions

Q.1. What is the importance of keeping accurate case notes?

Under Queensland legislation, accurate & objective case notes must be kept for each employee undergoing rehabilitation. Case notes must be signed & contained in the employee's confidential file & include details of:

- all communications between the employee, rehabilitation coordinator, doctors & other relevant parties;
- actions & decisions;
- reasons for actions & decisions; including information on
- updates on the employee's condition throughout rehabilitation;
- evidence of planning for rehabilitation & return to work; &
- records of return to work status or outcome of rehabilitation when the file is closed.

Case notes track the rehabilitation process and are an important resource, particularly in the event of another party/person taking over the case, the provision of evidence in a legal action and in cases where an employee has injuries that impact upon memory.

Q.2. Why does WorkCover need to collect personal information from individual claimants?

Throughout the claims and insurance processes WorkCover must collect personal information that identifies their customers. Information such as name, date of birth, financial details, occupation, contact details, health information and the claimant's financial/business affairs are gathered to ensure the effective delivery of their business and services. All information gathered and held by WorkCover is kept strictly confidential. Disclosure of this information is only permitted with the claimant's written authority or via FOI, although some information may not be released through FOI. For further information regarding WorkCover's Privacy Policy, simply follow this link: http://www.workcoverql.com.au/public/pdfobject/privacy_information.pdf

WPRC Profile

Judy Thompson, Kelvin Grove State College, and Pat Anderson, Ferny Grove State High School, are two experienced Workplace Rehabilitation Coordinators (WPRC) whose quiet, competent, dependable commitment to this their, 'second hat', roles adds considerable value to the District rehabilitation network and provides positive outcomes for the ill and injured staff they support. The confidence we have in experienced WPRC's such as these two women, allow Senior Rehabilitation Consultants to dedicate time to a critical part of their role: coaching less experienced WPRC's in order that they can also achieve what Judy and Pat do in their schools.



Useful Websites to Visit

The **National Occupational Health and Safety Commission (NOHSC)**: <http://www.nohsc.gov.au>, is Australia's national body that leads & coordinates efforts to prevent workplace death, injury & disease. Their website provides useful OHS information & practical guidance. In particular, their manual handling fact sheets provides comprehensive information & is a useful resource; <http://www.nohsc.gov.au/OHSInformation/NOHSCPublications/factsheets/manha1.htm>

Comcare is a statutory authority that is responsible for WHS, rehabilitation & compensation in the Commonwealth jurisdiction. Their website contains a number of useful publications in relation to rehabilitation & OHS. <http://www.comcare.gov.au>

