

Management of Psychosocial Issues in the Workplace

Dr Robert McCartney
Chief Medical Officer

Kinetic Health



Why Manage Psychosocial Issues?

- Moral
- Duty of Care
- Shareholders
 - Manage the resource
 - Minimise workers' comp



Impact on Workplace

- staff absenteeism
- staff retention
- Increased risk of acute and accumulative injuries
- Increased cost to workplace
- Decreased productivity



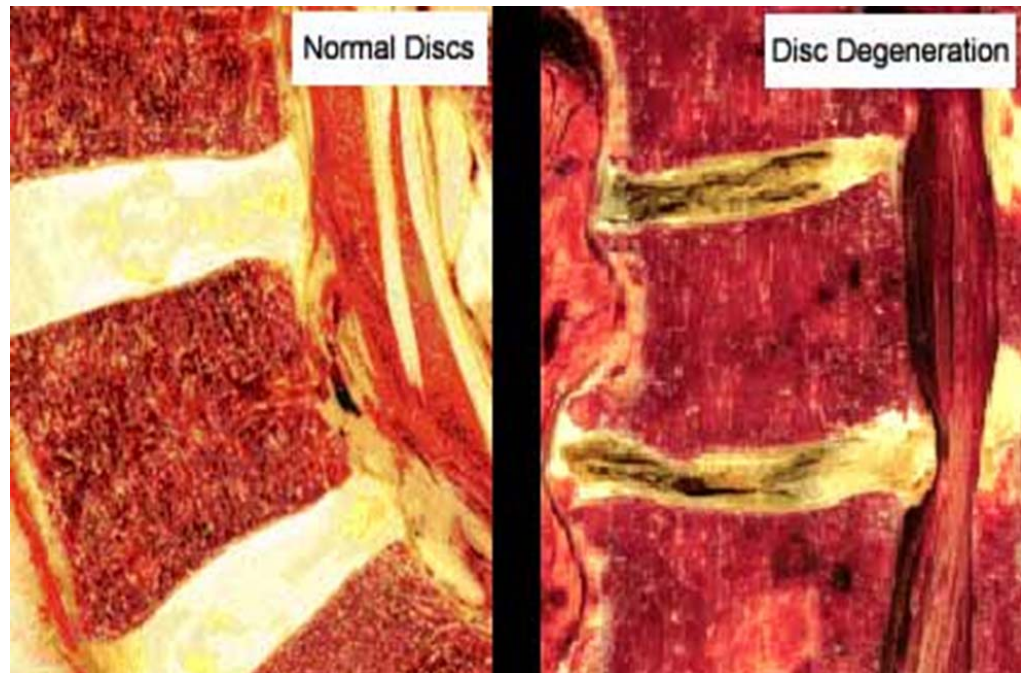
Human Factor Impact on Workplace

- Mental Health
- Obesity
- Physical Fitness
- Diabetes
- Fatigue



Impact on Workplace

- Rotator cuff
- Degenerative disc
- Slips, trips and falls
- Stress



Psychological Disability

- Impaired domains of psychological or social functioning:
- Impaired concentration and attention
- Impaired communications and social skills
- This may occur due to illness itself (e.g. lack of self confidence associated with depressed mood) or medication side-effects

Psychological Disability

Work is integral to our sense personal identity, self-esteem and worth. A fulfilling job promotes mental wellbeing and in a mentally ill is an important long-term prognostic indicator.

Unemployment conversely is associated with despair, mental illness and suicide.

Employment is necessary condition for the wellbeing of both the individual and society as a whole.

Psychological Disability

It brings both profit and benefit to the employer or organisation and increases (usually economic) output and productivity.

It provides income to the individual with it and improves standard of living to the employee as well as improving the economic productivity of society.

It reduces the financial burden on the states, increases consumer spending, tax revenue and economic output.

These benefits are obvious.

Psychological Disability

Work also brings a number of less tangible advantages to the individual such as social status and recognition, contact, support and an important forum for establishing social relationships, a daily routine and excuse to get out of bed in the morning as well as a sense of personal achievement.

Yellow Flags

- Yellow flags are indicators of psychosocial, workplace and other factors that increase the risk of developing or perpetuating long-term disability and work loss associated with musculoskeletal conditions.
- Identification of risk factors should lead to appropriate management of the individual, interpersonal, work and other relevant issues.
- Assessing the presence of yellow flag risk factors can identify
 - whether more detailed assessment is required,
 - specific treatment/intervention is required and/or
 - it may identify salient factors that can be the subject of specific intervention.

Yellow Flags

- Yellow flags should be identified early (in the first few weeks of a case wherever possible)
- Yellow flags are psychosocial (interaction between the injured workers and their social environment with the subsequent influence on their behaviour) and include:
 - Personal, family and social issues
 - Workplace and injured workers interaction
 - Workers compensation, financial and legal issues

Yellow Flags - Personal, family and social issues

Issues around:

- High levels of pain
- Attitudes and beliefs about their pain and dysfunction (avoidance, fear of re-injury, catastrophising)
- Diagnosis and treatment
- Emotional state (e.g. anxiety, depression, grief)
- Family / relationship difficulties

Yellow Flags – Workplace and injured worker interaction

Issues around:

- Workplace environment (physical, safety issues, past safety record)
- Interpersonal life and relationships at work (support, reaction to injury, return to work)
- Specific return to work issues (availability of duties, industrial pressures)

Yellow Flags – Workers compensation, financial and legal issues

- Dispute about the injury or cause
- Dispute about income maintenance payments
- Financial hardship
- Claim lodgement delays
- Lack of understanding or workers compensation (worker or employer)
- Litigation issues

Assessing Yellow Flags

Presence of 4 or more (especially the below 6) are indicative of psychosocial factors negatively impacting on a physical injury.

- Prior pain in the same body region (strongest indicator)
- Job dissatisfaction (employer / fellow workers)
- Belief that pain is harmful or disabling
- Chronic depression
- Low socio-economic status or manual worker
- Current disability income

Assessing Yellow Flags

Other relevant factors

- Fear of more pain with activity or work
- Smoking
- Low activity level
- High pain or illness behaviour
- Passive attitude to rehabilitation
- Back to work in next 3-6 months
- Litigation

“Good Work” – in summary



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makes a positive contribution to the health and wellbeing of the worker *and those affected by the worker*, and

- A. engages, and where necessary partners with, key stakeholders;
- B. engages with the community *culture* that reflects the local, regional and operational contexts in which the good work is performed
 - is attractive to good workers
- C. respects procedural justice and relational fairness
 - effective actions against incivility, discrimination and bullying
- D. appropriately balances the design of job demands, job control and workplace support (reflective of the specific industry):
 - clear and *realistic performance indicators* guiding and acknowledging the efforts of the worker
 - uses *hard and transparent* “people productivity metrics”
 - requires *matching* “the work” and “the individual”
 - requires aware managers *but not necessarily aware employees*
 - requires managing change effectively
 - mental and psychological wellbeing
 - life balance

Work team characteristics to minimise W/C

- strong team morale
- collaborative peer working relationships
- supportive manager behaviours
- managers provide high quality formal and informal feedback
- strong focus on quality client service
- managers role model organisational values

Remote Locations

- Social Isolation
- AOD
- Access to healthcare
 - Doctor
 - Dentist
 - Psychologist



Solutions

- FFW (pre-employment and periodic)
- Targeted health promotion
- Follow-up
- Tele-health



Thank You

E: Robert.mccartney@kinetichealth.com.au

M: 0439860163



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