

Essay 32 - Programme Your Occupational Health



What did the last Manual Handling Lost Time Accident cost you? Ok, not you personally, the Business you work for? If you don't know from the top of your head, please put your copy of *Sorry! We're Closed* down, bookmark on this page and go find out. Remember not just the Sick Pay; but the Agency Staff; the Business time of writing the RIDDOR reports; the time for meetings for all involved to discuss and manage the case; the lost productivity. Don't come back until you have got an approximate figure in your head.

Ok, welcome back. I would like you to write down that figure* below, to the right of the £ sign.

£

That's a lot of **lost** money. Money that could have been spent on positive Business investments. Maybe even on your Salary. Now, what did the last Injury at Work Claim cost your Business? The payout and the Legal Shark's fees. I would like you to write down that figure below, again to the right of the £ sign.

£

*I sound like a Magician?!

Wow! That's a serious amount of **lost** money*. I can see the CEO's tears. In *Essay 32 - Programme your Occupational Health* we are going to investigate simple, cost effective ways that can prevent this happening again. Firstly I am going to investigate the skill base of an Occupational Health Nurse.

The Occupational Health Nurse

Occupational Health Nurses (OHNs) are Qualified and Registered Nurses; many of whom have chosen to gain additional training and qualifications. OHNs protect and promote the health of people at work. They have direct contact with employees and are often approached with health related questions and problems.

Employees often see their OHN as a *first port of call* and seek advice on various matters, such as:

- A non-work related condition
- Where to get the best advice on a health issue or personal problem at home
- Health & Safety at work

Part of the OHN's role includes providing Health Screening Services. This includes assessing/ interviewing an employee who has come back to work following an MSD. Remember the title of *Essay 10*? It was *Recognise Experts from the Jack of All Trades*. This is by no means to put down the Profession of Nursing, but this is a simple fact. **Nurses are NOT Experts in Musculoskeletal Medicine**. I will ask this question. If they are NOT Experts in MSDs then why the hell are they always employed to screen an employee's MSD?

*If you're Business has never had an Injury at Work Claim, is this just luck? Ask yourself what task could cause one? The risk level of this (VERY HIGH/ HIGH/ MEDIUM/ LOW) and how much the Injury at Work Claim could be.

I will give you an analogy. Your neck hurts. And it hurts bad. You twisted your neck whilst driving and the next morning you can't move it. Generally this is due to what us Osteopaths call a *facet lock*. Putting it simply this is when a joint surface in the neck is so irritated by its position, that it causes neck muscle spasm via a short neurological pathway. For immediate relief and return to normal neck movement a High Velocity Thrust Manipulation of the vertebrae/joint is clinically indicated. Who would you want to administer this to your neck and get you out of pain? A Chartered Physiotherapist* who has attended a weekend Course on Spinal Manipulation or an Osteopath who started learning these techniques in the 2nd Year of their 4 Year Degree? You want an Expert, right? Not a novice!

This is simply fact. OHNs know how to take blood pressure. A person's pulse. Their temperature. Listen to their lungs. Check the skin for any visible signs of common disease. OHNs know how to take a general Medical Case History. They are not trained how to diagnose a possible herniated spinal disc. They are not trained in how to determine whether or not a person is faking a back injury. They are novices in Musculoskeletal Medicine.

Occupational Health Providers

If your Business is paying a lot of money to an Occupational Health Provider for assessing/ interviewing employees with possible MSDs, then from what you have just read (and I hope you *concur*; **do you concur?**), you are taking your CEO's hard earned money and essentially burning it. If you are more environmentally concerned, then you might as well be screwing those dollar bills up, into a nice money ball, and throwing it over your shoulder into the garbage.

I researched the websites of the first 5 Occupational Health Providers that *Google* threw up. All had the same standard Services including Sickness Absence Management; Health Surveillance; New Starter Health Assessments; Fitness for Work Assessments. One of them had a possibly useful App that helped support reductions in Workforce MSDs.

*This is not to put down Physiotherapy. If I sprained my ankle badly, I would rather a Chartered Physiotherapist tape it and prescribe me Rehabilitation Exercises, than an Osteopath. Every Profession has their skill base.

I say ‘possibly’ as would employees really use an App to do with work? Some would ... many wouldn’t in my opinion. The App would have to be groundbreaking. Some of these Providers talked about their Medical Professionals, naming Doctors and Nurses. None listed the specific Team Members and their Expertise. One Provider wrote that following their Occupational Health Assessment their ‘*Expert medical opinion*’ would be given. A couple of Providers had Physiotherapy Services, but didn’t include Osteopathy or Chiropractic. None had a page or any specific references to Musculoskeletal Disorder Assessments by an Expert.

Of course the Clients of these Providers will benefit from their Services. But concerning the management of MSDs, I now speak directly to all the CEOs of these Providers’ Clients and utter the words ...

“*Good luck!*”

With regard to Musculoskeletal Disorders here’s 5 Steps to *Programme your Occupational Health*.

1). New Starter Health Assessments

Within this Assessment is a Musculoskeletal Disorder Assessment. This should be performed by a Musculoskeletal Disorder Expert (MDE) being a Registered Osteopath or Chiropractor, or a Chartered Physiotherapist.

2). Fitness for Work Musculoskeletal Disorder Assessment

If an employee is reporting an MSD but is continuing to work it would be prudent to have them assessed by an MDE as soon as possible. Concerning an employee who has gone off sick due to an MSD this is covered in 3). When an employee returns to work following an MSD, on Day 1 of their return they should have an assessment by an MDE at their place of work. A diagnosis of their MSD should be known to Management. On Day 1 of the work return, this Assessment Consultancy should also include the following:

- Manual Handling & Ergonomic Risk Assessment of Employee Tasks
- 1-2-1 Optimal Manual Handling Practical Skills Training

3). Employee Rapid Access to Physical Therapy

Two out of the five Providers I looked at offered Physiotherapy Services. With regards to Physical Therapy I mean Osteopathy and Chiropractic. Physical Therapy involves application (onto the patient's body) of manual techniques by the Therapist. I have seen Physiotherapists who do very little of that.

I was employed by a Business who offered national access to Physical Therapy. From what I saw, I would not recommend using a Company like this. Utilise a couple of Osteopath or Chiropractor Clinics local to where your Business is based at. I wouldn't get involved with multiple Clinics i.e. ones that are near where the employee lives. Going through an Occupational Health Provider who offers these services is just paying a 'middle man' and is a waste of your Business' funds. Utilising a local Clinic makes sure the feedback about the employee is **directly** from the Osteopath or Chiropractor that is clinically treating them.

With an acute back strain/ spasm it generally takes 5 weeks and 5 Consultations with an Osteopath or Chiropractor to take the person from a lot of pain, say 8 out of 10 (as taken from our MSD Score Form – mentioned on *Essay 19*) to a pain level of 3 out of 10. This will need that the patient is **not** performing Manual Handling tasks and is likely off of work. This will cost between £250-£400 depending on the Physical Therapist's private costs. Let's link back to the first part of this *Essay* now.

**What did you write down for the most recent Lost Time Accident cost?
And the most recent Injury at Work Claim cost?**

Contracting this Service is in my eyes a no brainer; and for **ALL** employees to have access to. Helping to get employees back to work quicker with minimal Business disruption and financial loss. Obviously having the employee go through this Physical Therapy Rehabilitation Programme will not always prevent an Injury at Work Claim, and one that is successful. But boy ... wouldn't it look good in Court to the Judge if your Legal Shark can defend your Business and present evidence of your Professional (and *do the right thing*) attempt at supporting the ex-employee's Health and Wellbeing? A significantly less payout ... don't you think? I will be delving into all things Osteopathy in *Essay 33 - Grow the Osteopathic Profession*.

4). Workplace Health Promotion

From my 18 years in this trade since 2007, there only seems to be a focus on this by Health & Safety Professionals around Health & Safety Week in October. If this Promotion is run once a year, is the knowledge that employees have learned going to stick in their minds? And is the Practical application of what they have learned going to be practised months after? Promotions regarding Musculoskeletal Health run at your site could involve the following:

- BackCare 1 Hour Seminars
- BackCare & MSD Prevention 1-2-1s with our Occupational Osteopath
- Osteopathic Treatments
- Workplace Wellness Massage Therapy
- MSD Rehabilitation Stretching & Pilates Core Stability Exercise Classes
- Employee MSD Assessment
- Manual Handling Risk Assessment Supervisor Awareness
- Stretching Exercise Posters

Concerning Posters, before you purchase, please join me via *Microsoft Teams* and I can give you recommendations on what Posters available are the best. If you already have Posters I can also give you my Expert opinion on them too.

5). Provision of Rehabilitation Aids*

I have used the word *rehabilitation* but prevention is better than cure. There are job tasks where the employees' backs could do with a bit of support. Supply and enforcement of the wearing of a quality Neoprene Lumbar Support would benefit employees whose tasks involve a lot of enforced forward bending (stooping). For employees who have been off work due to a spinal MSD, wearing of a Lumbar Support may aid them in reducing their pain. Lumbar Supports should **not** be worn all day. Whatever the MSD is, a customised supply of a Rehabilitation Aid to the employee doesn't cost the earth. It can help to reduce their pain and also reduce the likelihood of Lost Time Accidents and Injury at Work Claims; and last but not least shows your employee that both you, the Health & Safety Professional, and their employer cares.

*Before you buy, **please don't use Amazon!** I hope you recall earlier my evidence based comments about how this Business works.

Exercises

- Go research the 5 Occupational Health Providers I looked at. Here they are:

www.everwelloh.co.uk

www.cope.co.uk

www.maitlandmedicaloccupationalhealth.com

www.healthmanagement.co.uk

www.staywelloh.co.uk

- Listen to *The Pain Free Podcast* where special guests include Osteopaths, Chiropractors and Physiotherapists.

www.osteopathicsolutions-manualhandling.co.uk/the-pain-free-podcast-hosted-by-osteopath-gareth-milner

Web Pages to Research

- As you may have found from the first Exercise it is a struggle to find Experts who provide MSD Assessments. We save you the time. Visit

www.osteopathicsolutions-manualhandling.co.uk/manual-handling-injury-assessment

- Learn about our MSD Rehabilitation Classes via www.osteopathicsolutions-manualhandling.co.uk/stretching-core-stability-classes

- Read our Creative Director *Emma Farrell's* Blog Post "*The Benefits of a Workplace Pilates Programme*" via

www.osteopathicsolutions-manualhandling.co.uk/osteopathic-solutions-blogs

This useful Blog includes a range of Exercises to support Back Health and reduce pain from Spinal MSDs.