



Job Ready Services

June 2012 Issue

Office Ergonomics: One Size Does Not Fit All

After completing her orientation at the airline reservation call center, Mary sat down in her new cubical at work and started her new job. She had done data entry work at her last job, but she was surprised at the quick pace that was expected at the call center. After 6 weeks of working at the call center, Mary started experiencing aching in her right shoulder and neck at the end of the day, but it was gone by the next day, so she wasn't worried about it. The next week, a co-worker left on maternity leave which meant more work for everyone else for the next few months. 1 month later, Mary noticed she was waking up at night with her right arm numb, but it went away after changing her position. Then the right hand started getting cold after a couple hours of work, then the aching and numbness started happening during the day. Two months later, Mary was unable to continue working because of her right arm pain and a physician diagnosed her with Thoracic Outlet Syndrome.

Repetitive Stress Injuries (RSI) or Cumulative Trauma Disorders (CTD) are growing as more and more people are using computers and other electronic devices such as smart phones and I-pads. According to recent annual statistics from the U.S. Survey of Occupational Injuries and Illnesses, musculoskeletal injuries account for nearly two-thirds of all workplace-related illnesses. In addition to spending \$20 billion annually on workers' compensation

costs due to RSIs, the U.S. spends another \$100 billion on lost productivity and employee turnover.

Presently, employers can expect to pay an average of \$33,000 for a CTD claim for the direct cost and an average of \$150,000 in indirect costs. If an employer has a 10% profit margin, they would have to generate sales of approximately 1.8 million to cover the cost of the average CTD claim. It is estimated that RSI "costs employers over \$80 billion yearly" according to the National Council of Compensation Insurance.

The good news is that musculoskeletal injuries in the workplace can be prevented! It is essential to identify the contributing factors to stop the recurrence of trauma and injury. By fitting the job to the person, rather than the person to the job, the use of ergonomic practices will assist in maintaining high levels of productivity, avoiding painful and costly employee injuries, and increasing worker satisfaction.

Unfortunately, employees often ignore the early warning signs because the symptoms may occur several hours after work activity has stopped. Because of this delay, employees don't make the connection between their work activities and the pain they feel until it's too late. Education of the risk factors and early detection will help

the employee to identify a problem before pain causes visits to the doctor and loss of productivity at work.

Here are several ergonomic tips you can put to use in your workplace right away:

1. Provide regular breaks for employees who perform an hour or two of the same motion in a fixed or awkward position. Breaks should also be given to employees who engage in frequent or forceful hand exertions or who use vibrating tools or equipment. Computer users should also take at least one five-minute break per hour.
2. Train employees in proper workstation posture and how to achieve it. For example, an employee should sit all the way back in the chair so that it supports the lower back.
3. Provide adjustable furniture that allows employees to rest their thighs parallel to the ground and their forearms at about the same height as their elbows. Chairs should be adjustable for height, and desktops should adjust to suit the height of the chair.
4. Position computer equipment properly for each employee. The monitor should be positioned so the top of the screen is slightly below eye level. The keyboard should be at a relaxing height for the shoulders, usually about 28 inches from the floor.

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Our Services:

- Functional Capacity Evaluations
- Work Conditioning
- Job Analyses
- Fit for Duty Testing
- Employment Testing



“Repetitive Stress Injuries or Cumulative Trauma Disorders are growing as more and more people are using computers and other electronic devices such as smart phones and I pads.”



“Office Ergonomics: One Size Does Not Fit All” cont.

5. Provide computer accessories, such as copyholders, arm supports, wrist rests, back cushions, and footrests. An adjustable document holder that attaches to the monitor and holds paper at eye level is a good accessory for typists and programmers.
6. Purchase keyboards that can be adjusted for individual comfort. For instance, some keyboards allow adjustments for right- and left-handed users.
7. Reduce eyestrain with better lighting. For example, consider task lighting as opposed to overhead lighting.
8. Promote proper phone comfort for employees who use a telephone frequently. Encourage them to keep their necks straight and the phone within easy reach, and to use headsets or speakerphones when appropriate.
9. Make efforts to reduce stress levels, since stress can be a contributing factor to RSIs. Frequent absences and irritability may be warning signs that stress levels are increasing.
10. Listen to employee complaints about discomfort or pain. Worker complaints of neck, back, hand, and wrist pain can all be early warning signs of RSIs.

Consider using Job Ready Services to study your workplace and to offer suggestions on how to improve it.

– **Article written by Julie Dubas, OTR/L, CEAS, Job Ready Functional Evaluator**

Upcoming Events

- July 25 – Debra Lord to speak at the NCALGESO conference – Wilmington, NC

Lunch and Learn

Thursday, June 28, 2012

12:00pm – 1:00pm

Topic: Cultural Diversity: A New Perspective

Speaker: Keven Wilberding

Cost: \$10.00

CRC & CCM credits approved – 1 hour

Location: Job Ready office in Raleigh, NC

To register: <http://www.jobreadyservices.net/index.php/contact/lunch-and-learn-registration/> or visit our website and click on “education”



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Are Background Checks a Form of Bullying?

In our last newsletter, we mentioned a new guidance released by EEOC. It addresses an employer's use of criminal history to exclude candidates from employment. Although the guidance makes it clear that having a criminal history does not mean that someone is in a protected class, EEOC is concerned that if employers restrict their hiring practices too broadly based on criminal records, the result may be a disparate impact on certain protected groups. If a job candidate challenges a failure to receive a job offer based on past criminal history and they are in a protected class, the employer will need to show that the decision is job-related and consistent with business necessity. Another very good reason for employers to be sure to conduct individualized assessments and do post-offer testing to make sure they are hiring the right person to do the job. For more information regarding this EEOC guidance: <http://www.natlawreview.com/article/new-eeoc-guidance-addresses-employers-use-criminal-background-checks>. For more information about testing your employees for physical safety, contact Job Ready!