

**SPECIAL
REPORT**



**BURLINGTON
MEDICAL CENTER**

OUR BUSINESS IS KEEPING YOUR BUSINESS WORKING.

What you should know about choosing the *RIGHT* Occupational Medicine Provider for your Company

Seven Reasons to not let employees go to their personal doctors for treatment of work-related injuries

New Jersey law allows employers to choose what medical provider treats the company's employees for work-related injury. Often, employees prefer to see their personal doctor. Among the reasons employees should not be given that option are the following:

- 1.** The employee's personal doctor typically has no awareness of your company, except what is said by the employee (the injured person). *Your company has no voice in that conversation.*
- 2.** Employees' personal doctors rarely have thorough knowledge of OSHA regulations, the Americans with Disabilities Act, nor the Family Medical Leave Act. *Having that knowledge is important.*
- 3.** Employee's personal doctor typically has no awareness of what light duty, or alternate duty, your company can make available to injured employees. *Utilizing light duty saves money for the company.*
- 4.** Your employee's personal doctor typically does not avoid unnecessary OSHA recordables (due to a lack of awareness of OSHA regulations). *Unnecessary OSHA recordables can be costly.*
- 5.** Employee's personal doctor has no incentive to get employee back to work. Employee preference may lead to unnecessarily extended medically-excused time off. *This practice costs your company.*
- 6.** Employee's personal doctor typically has little occupational medicine experience. *Occupational Medicine experience enhances quality of care.*
- 7.** The employee's personal doctor works at the pleasure of his/her patient (the injured employee). The company's concerns are typically not of concern to the doctor. *Your company's interests should matter.* +

5 Important Keys to Selecting and Evaluating the Best Occupational Medical Provider

In order to provide the best quality care for your employees with the optimal outcome for your company, look for these important qualities. Your companies' Occupational Medicine Provider should:

1. Advise your company whenever a Worker Compensation claim seems questionable.

Most employees who complain of injury on the job are legitimate and they just want to get better, feel better, and get back to work. A small percentage of individuals will complain of work-related injury which is not based in truth. An experienced and skillful physician can often recognize questionable cases. When that occurs, the physician should thoroughly question the employee, carefully document the communication, and seek additional information from the employer. The physician may conclude that the employee's complaint is not work related. That conclusion should be relayed to the employer and the employee should be referred to his/her personal physician.

2. Provide prompt physician evaluation and treatment of work related injuries and expedite safe return to work.

Your employees who come into a medical center are "on the clock". It is important that they be evaluated without delay even when the injury is minor. Having X-ray on-site and limited pharmaceutical availability on-site saves time and allows employees to promptly get needed treatment so they can quickly get back to comfort and productivity.

3. Be directed by a board-certified in occupational medicine doctor.

Board certification is a measure of excellence determined by a testing process. Your occupational medical

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provider should be under the direction of a doctor who is board-certified in occupational medicine. This assures that your employees receive care in keeping with current national occupational medicine standards. It also helps to ensure that employees are promptly and safely returned to their occupations.

4. Treat minor sprains and strains without physical therapy.

Physical therapy is often the most costly part of treating worker comp. sprains and strains. A back pain complaint can easily generate twice as much cost in physical therapy as the cost of doctor visits, imaging studies and pharmaceuticals combined. The reality is that most minor sprains and strains (including back injuries) do not require physical therapy. Most individuals with those injuries do very well when taught to use ice, heat, stretching and exercise modalities at home. Minor sprains and strains improve very well without physical therapy. There is no good evidence that physical therapy decreases the likelihood of future injury.

5. Communicate clearly with employer and employee.

The occupational medicine provider must establish good communication with employees to understand their injury claims and to help them understand the nature of their injury and the planned medical solution. It is important that the occupational medicine provider maintain email and/or telephone communication with the employer so that provider and employer are working together as a team, helping the employee return to comfort and productivity. +

What You Need to Know About Employer Opportunities Under Federal ADA Law

The Americans with Disabilities Act was passed in 1990. The Act places restrictions and obligations on employers, but it also grants opportunities to employers which can result in substantial reduction in employer cost and liability.

Pre-employment testing

The ADA permits every employer to reduce liability and risk of future costs by screening out individuals who are substance abusers prior to offering them a position of employment. Although the ADA does not allow physical examinations to be conducted prior to offer of employment, a drug test is not considered a physical examination. Substance abuse testing (drug testing) is a sophisticated, scientific process that reliably detects users of illegal drugs.

The ideal pre-employment drug test is the hair test. Whereas the urine test can check for drug use within the past days, up to a maximum of two to four weeks, the hair test can reliably detect illegal drug use within the past three months. Further, hair testing cannot be defeated by any shampoos or other hair treatments that may be advertised as able to cleanse drugs from the hair. When human hair strands are being manufactured at the cellular level (in the hair follicle), drugs are incorporated in the molecular structure of each strand of hair and cannot be washed away.

Further, people who are exposed to smoke from illegal drugs (such as marijuana or crack cocaine) would not have a positive hair test. The hair specimen is thoroughly washed of all surface contamination prior to testing. Testing of hair involves dissolving the thoroughly washed hair and converting that hair into a liquid, which can then be tested for the presence of marijuana, cocaine, phencyclidine (PCP), opiates, amphetamines and other illegal drugs.

Although not as effective as hair testing, urine testing is the required method of substance abuse testing for workers covered under the U.S. Department of Trans-

Did you know . . . that physical therapy (often the most profitable part of occupational health) is generally not necessary nor is it beneficial in treatment of sprains and strains of back, ankle, knee and shoulder? +

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portation (D.O.T.). Federal law mandates pre-employment drug testing for all tractor/trailer drivers, bus drivers, pilots, and passenger train operators. The substance abuse testing currently mandated by D.O.T. requires that testing be done to detect marijuana, cocaine, phencyclidine (PCP), opiates and amphetamines. The cost of urine drug testing is less than half the cost of hair testing.

Post-offer (pre-placement examination).

The ADA allows employers to require that new hires submit to a physical examination after a job has been offered and before the newly hired person has actually entered the new work position. This testing can be done to determine if the newly hired person is physically able to do the duties of the job. Further, this examination can be done to detect conditions (such as high blood pressure, diabetes, high cholesterol, heart disease, etc.) which can exist totally unrecognized in the newly hired individual.

Unfortunately, many individuals (even individuals with insurance coverage) do not have annual physical examinations and have had no recent physician evaluation prior to hire. Many, if not most, people do not undergo a physician evaluation unless they are having persistent pain, other symptoms. By requiring that new hires participate in a pre-placement examination, the employer cuts the risk that new workers will enter the workplace with undetected serious or potentially serious medical conditions.

Many dangerous medical conditions do not produce pain or other symptoms until they are far advanced. Early recognition of such conditions can lead to early treatment and avoidance of suffering, disability and major, long-term costs.

Additionally, a pre-placement examination can be used to test the individual against the physical demands of the job to make certain that the individual can safely perform the physical components of the job.

The ADA gives the employer full and unrestricted permission to do post-offer testing on new hires, with the caveat that once pre-placement testing becomes company policy, individuals of a certain job description must all be subjected to the same pre-placement physical examination. A company cannot (for example) choose to have strength testing done on just those newly hired laborers who appear frail or weak.

If the physical examination findings reveal that the newly hired individual cannot (even with accommodation) perform the essential requirements of the job, the ADA permits the employer to rescind that job offer.

Up Front Cost of Drug Testing and Post-Offer Examination

The up front cost of Drug testing and post-offer examinations is minimal. Depending on components chosen for the examination, the total cost is about what your company will pay the average new hire for the first one or two days at work (or the first one or two days on sick leave). The investment is small in light of the substantial reduction in liability risk and cost risk described above.

Clients of Burlington Medical Center experience reduced lost time, high employee satisfaction, lower liability, and lower cost of medical care. Perhaps your company should join them.

To become a BMC client, please contact Sylvia Reberg, Client Relations Specialist, at sylvia@bmcmed.com or 609-835-9555 ext.106



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