

SUMMER - FALL 2005

A newsletter of helpful information for employers, workers and healthcare providers.

Rehabilitation in Motion

Setting the Pace

CLINIC NEWS

Campbell River

It has been very reassuring to Campbell River and the surrounding communities that the forest industry and other processing businesses have seen an increase in business. As people return to work, unfortunately work-related injuries also begin to return. However, our clinic in Willow Point continues to provide comprehensive rehabilitation services to workers. We also provide on-site consultation to support industry in their prevention and disability management initiatives. We continue to work with forestry, logging, fish processing and farming.

Courtenay

Our Occupational Rehabilitation Program continues to grow. This program offers a multidisciplinary approach to treatment for more complex injuries. We combine the skills of physiotherapy, kinesiology, occupational therapy, sports medicine and psychology to provide a comprehensive approach for our clients. The program provides clients with all the tools they will need to maximize their level of function in order to resume recreational, work or other activity. Admission to the program also provides access to diagnostic services (MRIs, CT Scan, Boscans etc) on an expedited basis.

Port Alberni

Port Alberni continues their innovative approach to providing both rehabilitation and fitness services to the community. We offer a group exercise program to the Multiple Sclerosis Society, Central Island Chapter. We extend our thanks to Cindy Klassen, who has worked very hard over the past several months! As well, our Lifestyles Plus staff will be offering a "Neopolitan Circuit" training class involving Weights, Tai Chi, Cardio, Yoga and Swiss Ball Components. Contact us for details!

Physical work environment

- Noise
- Poor ventilation
- Poor lighting
- Too hot or too cold
- Poor workstation or tool design

Job design

- Too much supervision
- Shift work
- Too much work
- No decision-making
- Not enough different kinds of tasks
- Unclear job demands

Social & economic conditions

- No job security
- Discrimination (based on race, disability, age, sex)



HEALTH & SAFETY

Stress at Work

Stress is the body's response to physical and mental demands.

Stress is not just a problem in our minds. Our bodies have an "emergency response" that occurs when we are under stress. For example, when we have to run for a bus, parts of our body gear up to deal with the emergency. This response helps us run fast enough to get the bus. Our heart rate and blood pressure increase. Sugar is released into the blood. Our breathing becomes faster. Other parts of our body slow down. Our digestion slows down. Our immune (disease-fighting) system partly shuts down.

Once we get on the bus, our bodies quickly relax. The body needs this time to rest and recover after being stressed. Workers are at risk for health problems when their bodies are always responding to stress and not easily able to return to a relaxed state.

EARLY SIGNS OF STRESS:

- headache
- upset stomach
- sleep problems
- difficulty concentrating
- quick to get angry

What is workplace stress?

We experience stress at work when we are not able to meet the demands of our job. You may not be able to meet the demands of your job for reasons such as

- the amount of time you have to finish a task
- the tools you have to do a job
- the workplace rules you must follow

The most stressful jobs place heavy demands on the worker but give the worker very little control over how to do the job. Examples of high stress jobs are assembly line workers, data entry operators, and retail service clerks.

What can employers do to help?

- clearly define jobs and responsibilities
- give workers a say in how they do their jobs
- give workers opportunities to learn new skills
- allow time for social interactions among workers
- make work schedules flexible for responsibilities outside of work
- clearly communicate about job security and change

checklist

Is my job stressful?

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EXERCISE FEATURE

Cheaters and "Roids"

What are performance-enhancing drugs? Performance-enhancing drugs are substances that are used to increase certain physiologic functions. They affect things like muscle strength, endurance, the ability to pump blood, the ability to breathe, liver function and kidney function. These substances have an impact on athletic performance and physical performance as they may help somebody do better in competition.

What types of enhancing drugs are there? There are no true conventional categories of performance-enhancing drugs, but if you had to think about what they are, there would be dietary supplements and drugs that require a prescription, which include steroids. Then there would be peptides, or protein-like chemicals, like growth hormone.

There are other substances that don't really fit into a category that may or may not require a prescription. They are designer compounds because they have been manipulated so that they're not easily detected

What are anabolic steroids? How do they work? Steroids are a class of compounds made by the adrenal gland, as well as reproductive organs in our body. Examples of steroids include testosterone, a male hormone, and estrogen, a female hormone.

Anabolic means we build up tissue. So, as we eat protein, we get more muscle. If we inject steroids that are anabolic, we hold on to that protein and our muscle mass grows; we get stronger. The normal response to running or weightlifting might be to grow muscles and become stronger to a degree. But to add anabolic steroids to that recipe, so the muscles get even bigger or stronger, is unnatural and there can be hazards from doing that.

What types of anabolic steroids are there? The anabolic steroids include testosterone and its precursors: androstenedione (andro) and dehydroepiandrosterone sulfate (DHEAS). These are all produced naturally in the body.

What are the side effects of steroids? One adverse effect of anabolic-androgenic steroids, such as testosterone, is decreased sperm count in men. If we have a lot of testosterone, the pituitary gland won't be screaming so loud, so it gets turned off. As a result, sperm production gets turned off. However, many of the users and abusers of anabolic steroids have found ways to circumvent this. In fact, there are other medicines that can keep the sperm count up, even when you're using or abusing testosterone.

Testosterone has adverse effects on your lipid profile. Your lipid profile is cholesterol, triglycerides, "good" high-density lipoprotein (HDL) cholesterol and "bad" low-density lipoprotein (LDL) cholesterol. Excess levels of bad cholesterol can predispose you to heart disease.

Testosterone also causes increased breast tissue. Men who take steroids often are diagnosed with gynomastia (they grow breasts!).

In summary, the risks to health seen as a result of steroid use makes one ask, "is it really worth the risk?"

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ERGONOMICS

Handtools - Choosing the Right One!

As a continuation from last issue's article on tool handle design, we have compiled a list of points that one should consider when picking tools. Please remember that tools:

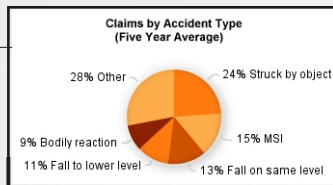
- Should be used within their design limitations and only for their intended purpose.
- Don't force the hand or wrist into awkward positions.
- Are well-balanced.
- Should fit the hand comfortably.
- Are not so heavy that they strain the arm and shoulder.
- Should not require excessive force to use.
- Should have handles designed to minimize the grip force needed. (For example, they are not slippery.)
- Should have handles with soft grips that don't cut into your hand.
- Should only be used for the right job. (i.e. only cutting tools are used to cut metal strapping or banding that secures cargo, not pliers or a screwdriver to pry strapping)
- Should not be combined with other tools not specifically designed for them. (i.e. come-alongs and extensions on wrenches, jacks, and hoists are designed for specific equipment, not just for any tool).



FYI

What's Hurting Workers in BC?

At Rehabilitation in Motion we treat a variety of injuries and conditions. Many of these referrals are as a result of a work-related injury. Worksafe BC (formerly known as the Workers' Compensation Board of BC), tracks injuries by cause, severity, duration and outcome. In British Columbia we are faced with the growing challenge of an aging workforce, combined with the nature of our resource based economy. This economy relies heavily on industries that require a great deal of physical exertion (logging, fishing, construction etc.) which, in turn, result in more "wear and tear" on the body. This also makes assisting workers to get back to work more challenging since they must be at a higher level of fitness than if they were returning to more sedentary work. Here is the percentage break-down of what types of injuries are being seen in British Columbia over the past 5 years:



Q's and A's



Where should my monitor be positioned at my workstation?

The monitor is an integral part of a computer workstation. When placed in the wrong position it can force the operator to work in a variety of awkward positions. Working with one's chin tilted upwards, and the head and upper body bent forwards or sideways is common wherever the monitor is improperly situated. Such forced working body positions significantly contribute to the operator's discomfort, and can potentially lead to work related musculoskeletal injury (WMSD). Other adverse effects of a poorly located monitor are eye irritation, blurred vision, dry burning eyes and headaches, collectively called eyestrain.

Common complaints among computer operators include discomfort, aches and pains in the neck and shoulder, but also eyestrain. The sheer number of such complaints indicates that the proper position of the monitor has not received enough recognition as an important factor in the arrangement of a computer workstation.

When deciding how to place your monitor, follow these simple rules:

- 1) Viewing distance (eyes to screen) should be between 60 and 80 cm.
- 2) The top menu line of your document should be in line with your eyes.
- 3) If you are a touch typist, orient the monitor slightly to the side with your copy directly in front of you.

Next issue...

- Preventing skiing and hockey injuries
- Keeping fit in the winter months
- Disability Management in heavy industry
- Nutrition advice and your bones
- Accident investigation

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