What is Musculoskeletal Wellness?
What is Musculoskeletal Wellness?

What is musculoskeletal wellness and why should employers care about it?

Musculoskeletal wellness used in an occupational setting is best defined as a coordinated and sustained effort to reduce muscle, joint, tendon, ligament and nerve injuries/illnesses across the workforce to improve availability and productivity.

Musculoskeletal injuries and illnesses decrease workforce health status and account for more healthcare spending than any other single health condition. Musculoskeletal injuries are the largest single category of workplace injury and account for 28% of all occupational injuries. Musculoskeletal injuries significantly contribute to the imbalance between hours paid and hours actually worked resulting in a significant decrease in workforce productivity.

For most U.S. employers, the health-related and injury-related direct program costs are bad enough; when the indirect costs are factored in, the numbers are staggering.

Promoting musculoskeletal wellness improves workforce availability

---

Organizational initiatives aimed at reducing musculoskeletal injuries/illnesses are often difficult to coordinate across the organization.

- Coordinated planning and integrated databases and analytic frameworks are lacking.
- Un-integrated programs are inefficient, and at times ineffective.
- A Chief Injury/Illness Officer in charge of all injury/illness prevention initiatives has not been appointed.

Most wellness programs often pay little attention to musculoskeletal wellness.

A growing number of employers are investing in wellness programs to improve the health status of their workforces. An internet search of the phrase “employee wellness programs” yielded more than 70,000 hits. However, a search of the phrase “musculoskeletal wellness” yielded only 1600 hits, and the phrase “musculoskeletal wellness program” yielded only 5 hits! The results of the search suggest that most wellness programs pay little attention to musculoskeletal wellness. For the most part, they either subsidize gym membership or promote the establishment of an on-site fitness facility. The former approach lacks any truly meaningful connection to the workplace, and the latter is limited to organizations with large concentrations of employees, abundant space/resources to devote to such a facility and extensive commitment from upper management.

WorkForce focuses exclusively on improving musculoskeletal wellness.

WorkWell’s WorkForce suite of services focuses exclusively on musculoskeletal wellness and augments existing wellness programs, safety initiatives and medical services. WorkForce is an integrated suite of musculoskeletal wellness services that increases workforce availability by reducing musculoskeletal injury and illness frequency and severity.
WorkForce:

• Focuses on three change areas in three phases of the employment life cycle
• Provides services that can be delivered on-site and/or through a national network of WorkWell certified providers
• Is claims-data driven
• Helps identify opportunities through unique insights not available until now
• Gives you the services you need, when you need them where you want them
• Provides a claims driven Return On Investment (ROI) analysis that quantifies opportunities and benefits
• Is locally delivered but is centrally controlled to ensure consistent high-quality delivery across multiple locations
• Is not a physical therapy staffing program
• Is not a medical clinic program

WorkForce is centrally administered to control quality but locally delivered to ensure connection to the worksite and convenience to both employer and employee.

• An international network of 10,000 WorkWell trained and credentialed providers ensure coverage for all client locations
• Web-based systems that record the provision of all services enhance quality control and resource allocation
• Medical oversight by WorkWell clinicians provides a single point of contact for the client on all issues, which means:
  ✓ The on-site provider is timely and accurate with all documentation to insure that all policies and procedures are followed
  ✓ Weekly calls with the on-site provider for training, review of cases, etc
  ✓ Monthly time allocation reports, visits and episodes reports and Dashboard with key metrics
  ✓ Quarterly reports to employer on status of key initiatives
• Analytic services integrate workers compensation, healthcare, OSHSA and HR data into meaningful metrics that quantify benefits and uncover opportunities
**Case study**

To illustrate how WorkForce can improve musculoskeletal wellness let’s look at how the services are used by a client that has facilities across the country as seen through the eyes of applicants, employees and the employer. The services are deployed at all of the client’s facilities according to the needs of each facility.

**It all begins with an objective and accurate functional job descriptions.**

The first step involves WorkWell consultants working with the client to create accurate, employee validated functional job descriptions (FJDs). These FJDs are created by WorkWell physical therapists who objectively measure the physical demands of the jobs in both the manufacturing and warehouse facilities.

- Push, pull lift carry
- How much weight?
- How high a lift?
- How often?
- With what equipment?
- In what environment?

WorkWell enters these job descriptions into WorkWell’s secure web-based job bank. This database provides a central repository for all the client’s FJDs, keeps track of changes and previous versions of job descriptions and is client accessible. Accurate, legally compliant FJDs form the basis for all services and are critical in reducing litigation risk.

From the FJDs, WorkWell consultants create, validate and store matching functional tests in the WorkWell system to be used with applicants and injured employees. Applicants are PreWork Screened (PWS) to insure that their physical abilities are adequate to meet the functional demands of the job. Selected injured employees are screened as part of the Return-To-Work (RTW) process to aide all parties in making an objective data driven RTW decision.

**Applicants are screened for physical abilities and pre-existing conditions.**

An applicant applies for a job with the client. As part of the application process the applicant receives a copy of the FJD and the PreWork Screen from the employer so he/she knows what the physical requirements of the job are and how they will be tested against them. An authorized employer representative enters a request to screen the applicant into WorkWell’s scheduling system via the internet. The applicant is contacted by WorkWell to schedule a post-offer PreWork Screen at the closest WorkWell trained provider. A PWS is scheduled to be completed within 72 hours of the applicant’s first availability.

**At the provider site the applicant:**

- Signs an employer approved consent form and completes a medical questionnaire that helps identify any existing medical conditions that might preclude him/her from taking the PWS
- Is given a musculoskeletal exam by a physical therapist to identify any conditions that might preclude him/her from taking the PWS and records baseline functional measurements that assess range of motion
• Receives instruction on how each task is to be completed and each task is demonstrated by the physical therapist to ensure the applicant knows how to correctly and safely complete them
• Completes the PWS

The provider enters the results into WorkWell’s system. The results are instantly sent to the employer’s applicant-tracking system and an email is sent to the hiring manager letting the manager know if the applicant passed or failed the PWS.

Benefits to the employer

• More informed hiring decision for both employer and employee
• Reduced turnover due to reduction in musculoskeletal injuries
• Lower musculoskeletal injury rate
• Fewer musculoskeletal claims
• Objective information on employee’s abilities at all phases of the employment lifecycle helps to make better RTW and litigation related decisions
• Fewer staffing headaches
• Improved workforce availability
• Improved workforce productivity
• Legally compliant, consistently applied services through a well-vetted process that has never resulted in WorkWell being named as a defendant in a lawsuit in our 23-year history

Benefits to the employee

• A better understanding of the physical requirements of the job and if he/she can meet them allows the employee to make a more informed decision as to whether the job is right for him/her

Newly hired employees are conditioned up to improve endurance and reduce injury risk.

WorkWell consultants work with the employer to identify certain manufacturing jobs where the risk of cumulative trauma is high due to the nature of the work. WorkWell then designs a New Hire Specific Conditioning to improve the worker’s strength, flexibility and aerobic condition through exercises and activities that simulate or include the actual job functions. These employees also receive targeted instruction and practical strategies to increase their musculoskeletal knowledge and problem solving using injury prevention and rehabilitation principles. These services are delivered at the employer’s site in certain locations and at the local WorkWell provider’s clinic at other locations depending on the volume of new hires and the location’s space constraints.

Benefits to the employer

• Reduced risk of repetitive-motion injuries to employees who are better prepared for the job and educated on repetitive-motion injuries and their prevention

Benefits to the employee

• Employees are better prepared for the job and empowered with the knowledge and tools needed to reduce their own risk of repetitive-motion injury
Symptomatic employees are seen right away to prevent injuries.

WorkWell’s on-site therapists reduce musculoskeletal injury risk by working with a symptomatic employee to alleviate the symptoms before a claim is filed. The therapist screens workers and evaluates the worksite as a result of the worker’s concerns, supervisor request or first responder’s request.

Symptomatic employees receive

- Early intervention screening/first aid
- One-on-one coaching regarding appropriate movement patterns, posture changes and strategies to reduce their discomfort and improve safe job performance
- Targeted instruction to increase the symptomatic worker’s musculoskeletal knowledge and problem-solving abilities using injury prevention and rehabilitation principles

Lastly, the therapist works as part of the employer’s ergonomic team to evaluate the worksite and work tasks, identify and reduce risks and prevent future injuries.

Benefits to employer

- Early intervention reduces the risk of injury thus improving workforce availability
- Costly injuries can be averted or their costs reduced
- Less operational headaches through fewer injured workers to work around

Benefits to employee

- Pain is acknowledged and addressed immediately through first aid or employer approved treatment
- Employee receives one-on-one work practice and work station evaluation to reduce the aggregating factors where possible
- A plan of action with a timeline is established between therapist, employee and employer so everyone understands how and when this issue will be addressed

Injured employees are promptly treated on-site or off-site by physical therapists who know your work environment.

WorkWell’s post-injury services are aimed at safely returning a worker to productive capacity as soon as possible through the judicious use of therapeutic services.

Employees with musculoskeletal injuries receive:

- On-site or locally provided evaluation and treatment by licensed therapists who have extensive knowledge of the client’s jobs and work environment
- A treatment plan focused on restoring movement, maximizing strength, decreasing pain/symptoms, restoring function and promoting safe return to work
- Post-injury specific conditioning where needed to improve the worker’s strength, flexibility, and aerobic condition through exercises and activities that simulate or include the actual job functions
- A job specific functional test to determine a worker’s readiness for return to work. (the results are provided to the physician prior to the physician’s final release to work)
In addition, WorkWell provides the client with a transitional work program and traditional functional capacity evaluation (FCE) services when and where needed.

**Benefits to the employer are a decrease in**

- Average incurred cost/worker
- Average paid/claim
- Average incurred per claim
- Claim volume per 100 workers
- Claim volume $100k and above
- Lag time in reporting (average days)
- RTW percentage
- Average lost time days
- Litigated claim volume
- Closed claim percentage
- Medical claim costs

Other considerations include the early intervention benefits to the employee. The employee knows that he/she is doing what is necessary to rejoin the team and morale stays high.

**Client results**

Working very closely with our client partners, baseline measurements are established and criteria for analysis are agreed upon. Direct costs such as claims costs and reduction of MSD injuries are measured. Indirect costs such as impact to the medical plan, absenteeism, presenteeism, injury avoidance from preventative and conditioning programs, recruitment costs and other benefits realized are much harder to measure consistently from client to client but WorkWell and each of our partner clients determine the measurements of accountability for the program’s success.

**Results on programs such as the on-site clinic prevention and rehabilitation model previously discussed** realize the following results for our average client over a two-year span:

- Direct ROI range 2.6-8.3:1
- Indirect ROI range 5.2-16.6:1

**Our company specific litigation comparison tool**

- Compares litigated cases to historical cases of the same age and type
- Provides case reviews supporting reduction in litigated claims costs based on 10-20 claims cases and 118 prevention cases
- ROI 20.85:1
Clinical experience

WorkWell has a rich legacy of delivering effective solutions to businesses through our Physical and Occupational Medicine Network. Our introductory product, the Functional Capacity Evaluation (FCE), remains internationally recognized as the market leader and clinical standard.

WorkWell programs, including Functional Capacity Evaluation, Functional Job Analysis and PreWork Screening, are successfully used in many large hospitals in the U.S. today. Hospitals can use WorkWell’s programs and services internally as well as offer the services externally to employers in the community.

Pricing

Consistent with a product solutions strategy, a pricing strategy is customized for our clients. We will together consider product, service and implementation costs as we agree on how to deploy these programs. Generally speaking, on-site services can be valued either at an hourly, daily or monthly rate and can include a WorkWell consultant to train, perform Functional Job Descriptions (FJD) or provide other one-time programs. Other services, such as PreWork Screens (PWS), Functional Capacity Evaluations (FCE) and/or Return to Work (RTW) programs can be charged per service or folded into the daily or monthly rate as it makes the best sense for the program costs and effectiveness.