



### What's New at Work-Able Solutions?

#### Evaluation of Acquired Brain Injury:

In order to provide the best service possible to our clients with acquired brain injury, and to rehabilitation stakeholders: we have recently acquired the Cognitive Competency Test (CCT). As its name implies, the CCT is designed to assess cognitive competency. It uses a practical approach by simulating daily living situations and evaluating the cognitive skills that are required to maintain safe and independent living.

The CCT can be used in conjunction with a battery of other tests administered by Psychology and/or Psychiatry to determine overall mental competency. The Cognitive Competency Test addresses a wide range of cognitive skills and activities that are reality based, representing situations most basic to survival; varying from concrete skills to abstract problem solving, and safety judgment. It is a particularly useful tool when level of competency and placement issues are in question.

This evaluation tool is a great addition to the battery of standardized assessment tools already used at Work-Able Solutions, including The Cognitive Assessment of Minnesota, The Rivermead Behavioural Memory Test, and The Cognistat.

#### Keeping up with New Legislation in Manitoba:

There has bit a fair amount of buzz in the rehabilitation community, and to a certain extent in the media regarding changes to workplace health & safety legislation related to the role of good ergonomics to ensure a safe work environment and to reduce the risk of musculoskeletal injury for office workers / computer operators. There have also been recent changes to the workers' compensations act related to early return to work and mandatory re-employment and accommodation of injured workers. We have had numerous meetings with representatives from both Workplace Health and Safety and the WCB to better understand this new legislation, ensure our practices are consistent with the legislation, and to better assist our clients.

#### Continuing Education Activities:

Leslie Johnson recently attended the **Human Factors in Design Course** which was held in Winnipeg on March 1 and 2, 2007. The goal of the conference was to bring together a wide range of professionals who have a role in creating accessible homes and communities. Presenters included occupational therapists, architects, planners, policy makers, product and equipment

June 2007

Volume 2 Issue 1

#### Inside this issue:

<i>What's New at Work-Able Solutions?</i>	1
<i>Focus On: Office Ergonomics - Who Gives The Best Advice?</i>	2
<i>Service Description: Office Ergonomic Assessment</i>	3

vendors, insurance representatives, researchers, educators and consumers with mobility impairments. Practical and interesting topics related to universal design in public places and homes, comprehensive evaluations and renovations for existing properties, creative design solutions for maximum function, and funding alternatives were presented. This well attended conference achieved the goal bringing together an interesting collection of stakeholders to work toward identifying how to build or modify environments which are functional for persons with mobility impair-

## Focus On: Office Ergonomics: Who Gives the Best Advice?

*Manufacturers of “ergonomic” office equipment and products often publish guidelines: the most obvious concern is that the guidelines are designed to sell the products.*



### The Problem...

So, you've got a problem with office ergonomics. Or, maybe you just want to prevent problems. You are trying to use published “ergonomic guidelines”, or maybe you would like to hire a specialist to perform an ergonomic evaluation. Before you invest your company's money in new equipment, employee training, or a consultant, you need to ask some serious questions...

### Using Published Guidelines

There are many published resources on office ergonomics: How do you know if these guidelines are correct or safe? Here are some questions and considerations to help you to decide:

- **Does the author know what they are talking about?** Taking a few ergonomics seminars does not necessarily make a person qualified to provide advice on

the topic. Also: it is possible to call oneself an “ergonomist” without having any formal education or experience

- **Does the author have a hidden agenda?** Who paid their fees? - Were there restrictions on the range of guidelines offered in order to control expenses. Guide-

lines that are developed by committees may tend to represent the minimum standards rather than the optimal level of practice.

- **Is the author selling a product?** Manufacturers of “ergonomic” office equipment and products often publish guidelines: the most obvious concern is that the guidelines are designed to sell the products.
- **Are the guidelines based on science or just preference?** Some guide-

lines are developed based on science regarding anthropometrics, studies measuring effects, or carefully designed symptom reviews. Despite the best research: there will always be new studies and new recommendations: what research are the author's guidelines based upon? Be careful using guidelines that are based simply on worker preferences: what were the actual conditions under which the preferences were obtained?

- **Are the guidelines overly precise?** There are no cliffs in ergonomics: one inch further will not cause a fall to the death. Guidelines that are based on precise measurements are ridiculous because these will not fit every worker. Guidelines should focus on body positions and instruct on how to achieve these positions.

*No wonder there is confusion about ergonomics: there is a huge range of good, bad and voodoo ergonomics out there.*

- **Do your workers rebel when you try to implement the guidelines?** If you have to fight to get people to follow the guidelines, then there may be something wrong with them...the guidelines that it, not the workers. Guidelines that are overly restrictive, with every joint angle at 90° are not practical. Consider that it is not really advantageous to work 8-hours in one position, no matter how perfect it is. If workers balk at a suggestion, ask them why, and try to encourage a trial or adjustment period before making more changes.

### Consulting a Specialist

We have probably all run into someone who considers themselves an “expert” in office ergonomics after reading an article or attending a weekend course. No wonder there is confusion about ergonomics: there is a huge range of good, bad and voodoo ergonomics out there. Another concern is that there are no specific regulations regarding the practice of ergonomics. So where do you turn?

As a growing science, ergonomics is attracting people from many fields including medicine, engineering, psychology, physical therapy,



athletic therapy, and occupational therapy.

Be aware of the qualifications and experience of the person you intend to consult with: ask for references, and consider issues such as whether the professional is governed by a regulatory body or carries liability insurance coverage.

**Are Occupational Therapists qualified to work in ergonomics?**

Occupational therapists are

trained extensively in anatomy and the effects of illness, injury and disability. They have special training in task analysis, psychology, and job adaptations. They can determine how the components of a workplace can facilitate a healthy and efficient environment or one that could cause injury or illness. An OT can help employers identify hazards that may contribute to on-the-job injury, and determine how these can be eliminated. Occupational therapists are specialists in determining how injury, disability, and the environment affect

work performance. The skills and training of an occupational therapist seem particularly suited to ergonomics; however, therapists should also obtain specific ergonomics training and experience before being



**Service Description: Ergonomic Assessment for an Office Worker**

Ergonomics is the science of matching the work and environment to the worker. A poor fit between the worker and environment can cause physical and psychological stress. This can result in physical health problems or injuries to muscles, joints, and nerves.

*Good office ergonomics will:*

- Benefit employees with:
  - Increased comfort and reduced risk of injury
  - Improved morale
  - More job satisfaction
  - Higher productivity

*Good office ergonomics will:*

- Benefit employers with:
  - Reduced costs associated with injuries

- Earlier return to work
- Reduced absenteeism
- Increased productivity

*Office Ergonomic Assessment Goals:*

- To improve the ergonomic design of the computer/office workstation
- To facilitate ideal and safe working postures



*What To Expect:*

- Evaluation of the equipment and workstation design
- Assessment of the job duties, physical symptoms and work postures / habits
- Ergonomic recommendations that are practical, cost-effective, and consistent with current research evidence
- A review of the recommendations during the assessment, and assistance to make immediate adjustments
- Education regarding proper ergonomics
- A summary report outlining the ergonomic problems and recommendations
- A complete reference package on computer/office ergonomics



## Work-Able SOLUTIONS

Occupational Therapy Consulting Services

**PO Box 38033  
Winnipeg, Manitoba  
R2E 1H3**

**Telephone: 204.338.0601  
Fax: 204.334.8898**

**To arrange a consultation or  
to inquire about our services,  
please contact Elaine Huzel.**

*Work-Able Solutions* is dedicated to providing quality occupational therapy services that are customized to meet the needs of our clients.

Our services are designed to:

- Assist adults affected by injury or illness, achieve their maximum level of function in order to safely return to work and activities of daily living
- Assist employers to prevent workplace injuries and accommodate workers with disabilities

*Work-Able Solutions* is dedicated to providing evidence-based, cost-effective services. We continually adapt our programs and services to meet the changing needs of our clients and other rehabilitation stakeholders. Our clinical consultants share a dedication to ongoing education, research, and training.

*Work-Able Solutions* offers a wide range of assessment and rehabilitation services that address a full spectrum of impairments and disabilities. Some of our services include:

- Office ergonomic assessments and seminars
- Industrial ergonomic assessment
- Job demands analysis
- Work site evaluation
- Functional capacity evaluation
- Personal assistance needs assessments
- Home accessibility assessment
- Work accommodation assessment
- Education seminars
- Return to work programs
- Brain injury and neurological rehabilitation programs
- Injury prevention programs

### Our Experienced Consultants



**Elaine Huzel, BMR (OT)**  
Company Director, Occupational Therapist



**Leslie Johnson, BHSc (OT)**  
Occupational Therapist



**Tracey McIntosh, BSc OT(C)**  
Occupational Therapist

**Visit us on the web:  
[www.workablesolutions.ca](http://www.workablesolutions.ca)**