



What's New at Work-Able Solutions...

Welcome Stacey Ross, OT:

Stacey obtained her Master of Occupational Therapy Degree in 2005, and brings a fresh approach to Work-Able Solutions. She has experience providing occupational



therapy to individuals of all ages, from children to the elderly, with needs ranging from acute to chronic rehabilitation, throughout Canada and

the United States. Stacey is a *Certified Brain Injury Specialist*, recognized by the American Academy of Certified Brain Injury Specialists, and has specialized training in assessment and treatment of visual information acquisition. Her training has provided a solid foundation in the best practices for brain injury rehabilitation, and her work in California providing occupational therapy services to individuals with mild to severe brain injury has provided her with valuable experience in complex cognitive-behavioural rehabilitation, which she now brings to our clients. Stacey's energetic approach and commitment to continuing education make her an innovative occupational therapist, and a strong member of our team.

Congrats to Leslie Johnson:

Leslie earned her Master of Science (Rehabilitation) degree in 2008. The program required a research-based thesis, and the completion of an original scientific study in rehabilitation. Leslie's research thesis project compared the effectiveness of two office ergonomics educational methods: lecture-based and participatory. Employees at Health Links, a health information contact centre, participated in the project. Employees were assessed prior to and 6 weeks after participating in a education session. The good news that both methods of office ergonomic education programs were effective in creating positive workstation changes and safer workplace behaviours. Of interest, however, is that those in the participatory education group reported a higher level of satisfaction with the educational process and a greater sense of feeling empowered to make changes on their own. These findings support the effectiveness of the ergonomics programs offered at Work-Able Solutions!

Assessment of Brain Injury:

In order to provide the best service possible to our clients with brain injury, and to rehabilitation stakeholders: we may use the Cognitive Competency Test (CCT). The CCT is designed to assess cognitive competency 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, and to the functional home-based assessment process that we utilize.

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Focus On: Office Ergonomics - What Approach Works Best? Written By: Elaine Huzel

The Problem...

So, you've got a problem with office ergonomics. Or, maybe you just want to prevent problems. You may be thinking of using 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:

Is the author trained and experienced? Taking a few ergonomics seminars does not necessarily make a person qualified to provide advice. Also: it is possible to call oneself an "ergonomist" without having any formal education or experience.

Manufacturers of "ergonomic" office equipment often publish guidelines designed to sell their products.

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 preference? Some guidelines 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. Be wary of using guidelines that are based simply on worker preferences: what were the actual conditions under which the preferences were obtained?

Are the guidelines too precise or restrictive? Guidelines that are based on precise joint measurements are ridiculous and impractical because these will not fit every worker. Guidelines should focus on body positions and instruct on how to achieve these positions. Consider that it is not really advantageous to work 8-hours in one position, no matter how perfect it is.

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. 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

No wonder there is confusion about ergonomics: there is a huge range of good, bad and questionable "ergonomics" advice out there.

as whether the professional is governed by a regulatory body or carries liability insurance coverage.

Occupational Therapy and Ergonomics Occupational therapists are trained extensively in anatomy and are specialists in determining how illness, injury, disability, and the environment affect work performance. An OT can help employers identify hazards that may contribute to on-the-job injury, and determine how these can be eliminated. 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 considered a specialist.

Picking Your Approach

Do you want to be reactive or proactive? Use guidelines on your own? Train employees through ergonomics workshops? Hire a specialist? Each approach has advantages and disadvantages ranging from cost to effectiveness for your company. The financial benefits of comprehensive safety and health programs has been well documented. Talking to a specialist about your goals will help you decide what will work best for your company.

Employee Education: There is good research evidence to support that office ergonomics education results in a decrease in reporting of musculoskeletal symptoms. The research also indicates that "participatory" education (where workers are involved in discussion and problems solving exercise to aid in applying ergonomic concepts) is better than lecture-style education. However: there is a lack of good evidence to suggest that workers *consistently* return to their workstations and made improvements to the set-up or improve their work postures after education.



Risk Assessment: Sometimes called a “walk-through”, this type of assessment can be used to determine the level of risk associated with workstation design, equipment in use, and certain work tasks. It is particularly helpful when you are considering new equipment, and when there is a fair amount of consistency in the workstation layout, work tasks, and equipment already in use. The effectiveness of this type of assessment will depend somewhat on your goals, and the way the consultant conducts the assessment and presents you with results and recommendations. Be clear about your expectations and goals and you will experience a better outcome.

Individual Workstation Assessment: This one-on-one assessment occurs between a worker and an ergo-



nom ic consultant. It is designed to take a detailed look at one particular workstation, a particular set of work demands, and the habits of the worker. This type of assessment typically results in a high degree of successful change, and many adjustments can be made during the assessment. It is most beneficial in situations where a proactive approach is desired, a high injury risk has been

identified, many workers are reporting symptoms, the job tasks and equipment vary between workers, or when a worker has reported an injury. As an employer, you should expect to receive a list of problem areas, with detailed recommendations. The worker should receive detailed explanations regarding any adjustments and education regarding personal work habits and postures that may be causing their problems.

References: NIOSH. Elements of Ergonomics Programs. Publication No 97-117. Ankrum, D.R. (2001) Questioning Office Ergonomic Guidelines. *Applied Ergonomics*. London: Taylor & Francis. Bohr, Paula C. (2000) Efficacy of Office Ergonomics Education. *Journal of Occupational Rehabilitation Vol 10, No 4*.

Service Description: Acquired Brain Injury Rehabilitation Program

The Work-Able Solutions approach to brain injury rehabilitation combines evidence-based methods of treatment and a philosophy of community-based rehabilitation and teamwork. Our therapists are trained to recognize and address the complex combination of physical, cognitive, emotional, and behavioural changes that can occur following brain injury. Our focus is on rehabilitation carried out in real-life settings to maximize recovery and independence.

Rehabilitation Assessment

Occupational therapy assessment includes evaluation of: cognitive function, physical function, and ability to perform daily activities.

The therapist will observe function, use standardized tests, and interview the injured person and his/her family

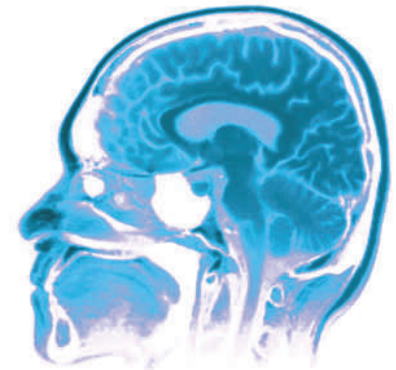
or caregivers. Assessment is an important part of the rehabilitation process as it allows the therapist to:

- Develop goals and determine treatment effectiveness
- Determine whether an individual can live independently and/or what supports may be required

Rehabilitation Treatment

The main goal of rehabilitation following brain injury is to restore function and independence in daily living, and to help the individual regain the skills most of us take for granted. The occupational therapist will work to:

- Establish daily routines and promote skills for real-life tasks and situations
- Improve cognitive and physical function using targeted exercises
- Develop strategies for managing changes in behaviour



- Provide support and education to the injured individual and family/caregivers
- Use technology, specialized equipment, or devices to accommodate for deficits
- Develop employment skills and determine when return to work is appropriate
- Coordinate and monitor return to work programs

Successful rehabilitation requires a team approach. We will arrange for specialist services, work in collaboration with other professionals, and link our clients with community resources and programs.



Work-Able SOLUTIONS

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Company Profile:

Work-Able Solutions provides privately funded, community-based occupational therapy services in Manitoba. We have been in operation since 1998. We are dedicated to providing quality services by:

- Utilizing evidence-based assessment and rehabilitation techniques
- Providing cost-effective and focused interventions
- Developing customized programs and services to meet the needs of our individual and corporate clients
- Preparing clear, concise reports with practical and feasible recommendations
- Offering a team of very experienced and qualified occupational therapists, who share a dedication to ongoing education, research and training

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 offers a wide range of assessment and rehabilitation services:

- Office and Industrial Ergonomic Risk Assessment
- Job Demands Analysis
- Worksite Assessment and Accommodation
- Functional Capacity Evaluation
- Personal Care Assistance Needs Assessment
- Home and Activities of Daily Living Assessment
- Return to Work Programs
- Acquired Brain Injury Rehabilitation Programs
- Chronic Pain Programs
- Employee Training and Wellness Workshops

Our Experienced Consultants:



Elaine Huzel, BMR (OT)
Clinic Director, Occupational Therapist



Leslie Johnson, MSc, BHSc. (OT)
Associate Occupational Therapist



Stacey Ross, MOT
Associate Occupational Therapist