



Suite 5 Petroleum House
12 Brodie-Hall Drive
Technology Park
Bentley 6102
Western Australia

Telephone 08 9355 1400
Facsimile 08 9355 1499
Email safety@marcsta.com
www.ohswa.marcsta.com
ABN: 83 170 105 830

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH SOCIETY OF AUSTRALIA (WA BRANCH) LONG DURATION CLAIMS AND DELAYS IN RETURN TO WORK What can be done about it?

Prompt return-to-work is essential to the health and welfare of injured workers.

A seminar to address long duration worker's compensation claims – their increasing incidence and duration – was held at the Function Centre, 2 Brodie Hall Drive, Technology Park Bentley on **Thursday 31 October**. The objective of the seminar was to establish whether, and in what ways, the current process can be improved

A question/discussion period followed each presentation.

SUMMARY OF PRESENTATIONS

Long Duration Claims - Overview of Workers' Compensation and Injury Management

Mr Chris White, Acting Chief Executive Officer, Legislation and Scheme Information, WorkCover WA

and

Long Duration Claims - Statistics

Ms Leona Glasby, Manager Research and Evaluation, Legislation and Scheme Information, WorkCover WA

Chris White provided a clear and frank explanation of the operation of the WA Workers' Compensation Scheme and the role of WorkCover WA in ensuring compliance.

Excellent current data to enable participants to gain an understanding of the increasing incidence and duration of long duration claims and the workplace injuries that were absorbing the greater proportion of employer premiums was provided.

He acknowledged that problems still exist with the current processes and WorkCover were continually acting to address these concerns and suggest legislative amendments where changes were necessary.

The refreshing and open approach taken by both presenters was appreciated.

Emphasis was placed on the obligation of employers, insurers and self-insurers to comply with the Act and, in particular, the return-to-work of injured persons and the realisation that work is a key factor in their self-worth, family esteem and identity.

The full paper is available on the Society website. <http://www.marcsta.com/oh-society/seminar-s.aspx>



Suite 5 Petroleum House
12 Brodie-Hall Drive
Technology Park
Bentley 6102
Western Australia

Telephone 08 9355 1400
Facsimile 08 9355 1499
Email safety@marcsta.com
www.ohswa.marcsta.com
ABN: 83 170 105 830

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH SOCIETY OF AUSTRALIA (WA BRANCH)

Long Duration Claims - A Public Sector Snapshot

Ms Linda Thompson, RiskCover Services Manager, RiskCover WA

Linda detailed the current long duration claims experience in the Public Service, their severity, mechanism of injury, age range and occupation.

The following factors influencing long duration were considered:

- high risk roles
- aging workforce
- stress claims
- reluctance to work outside the Public Sector
- injury management

Important current Public Service initiatives which have had positive results on public service performance were identified.

Examples included:

- mandatory reporting requirements in annual reports;
- training of line management in occupational health and safety;
- introduction of KPIs in CEO performance agreements;
- auditor general injury management reviews.

The key message for improving performance - early identification and personalised management of injury and disease claims.

Role of the Insurance Sector in Achieving Prompt Return-to-work

Mr Craig Stewart, State Claims Manager WA, CGU

Craig provided excellent coverage of all aspects of long duration claims and problems associated with prompt return-to-work.

His presentation was clear and easy to follow and he responded positively to questions from participants.

Matters addressed, specifically:

- costs aligned to duration of claims
- causative factors for long duration claims
- identifiable flags/barriers for long duration claims
- causative factors for long duration and delayed return-to-work
- opportunities that employers can utilise to better manage claims
- initiatives being introduced by insurers to limit duration

The full paper is available on the Society website. <http://www.marcsta.com/oh-society/seminar-s.aspx>



Suite 5 Petroleum House
12 Brodie-Hall Drive
Technology Park
Bentley 6102
Western Australia

Telephone 08 9355 1400
Facsimile 08 9355 1499
Email safety@marcsta.com
www.ohswa.marcsta.com
ABN: 83 170 105 830

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH SOCIETY OF AUSTRALIA (WA BRANCH)

Rehabilitation and Return-to-Work

*Ms Michelle Butler, President, Australian Rehabilitation Providers' Association (WA)
Regional Manager WA, SA & NT, The Recovre Group*

Michelle discussed what can be done to reduce delays in return-to-work and the role of accredited providers emphasising their service standards, qualifications and performance measurement.

Factors affecting return-to-work and the role of general practitioners, employers, lawyers, injured workers and workplace rehabilitation providers were thoroughly explained.

The follow up keys to driving success were identified and clearly defined:

- corporate commitment
- early intervention
- bio-physical approach
- pro-active case management
- collaboration and transparency planning RTW
- communication an essential element
- general practitioner education

The full paper is available on the Society website.

Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP)

Dr Dilip Sharma

Dr Sharma commenced with an emphasis on the importance of early return-to-work for the long term health of injured persons.

He discussed the role of general practitioners in the initial assessment and treatment of claimants and their central role in the processing of claims.

Medical barriers in return-to-work programs and factors that influence general practitioner attitudes were discussed:

- mental health status of patients
- doctor-patient relationship
- limited knowledge of the employer's workplace
- fear of personal safety
- administrative burden of processing claims

Some suggested areas for improving what is currently an unsatisfactory process were:

- the consultative process, e.g. sufficient time, patient's health history, clear return-to-work program, psychological factors
- improved contact with return-to-work providers
- early involvement of specialists, rehabilitation providers
- training of general practitioners who have little exposure to the workers' compensation process in their training
- financial reimbursement of general practitioners who are always under pressure to process patients
- the need for a co-ordinated approach by all concerned parties to achieve the well-being of employees.