

Working Healthy

A newsletter from the Mercy Occupational Health Program

WINTER 2008

Mercy Occupational Health is a full service occupational health clinic providing all your business-related health needs.

THREE LOCATIONS:

**540 East Jefferson Street,
Suite 205
Iowa City, Iowa 52245
Telephone 319-339-3921
Fax 319-339-3858**

**2109 Cedarwood Drive,
Suite 200
Muscatine, Iowa 52761
Telephone 563-263-3921
Fax 563-264-2525**

**407 South White Street
Mt. Pleasant, Iowa 52641
For appointments, call the
Iowa City office: 319-339-3921**

OUR STAFF INCLUDES:

**Charles Buck, M.D., Medical
Director
Theodore Koerner, M.D.
Tina Stec, M.D.
Tom Dean, PA-C
Georgene Lynch, RN, Manager
Karen Plock, RN, Staff
Coordinator
Kelly Garvin, M.B.A.,
Marketing Coordinator
Jennie Antolic, Billing
Secretary**



*Exceptional Medicine.
Extraordinary Care.*

**540 East Jefferson Street
Iowa City, Iowa 52245**

www.MercyOccupationalHealth.org

Knowledge equals power in preventing workplace injuries

By Tracy Marker, Employee Safety Manager, Mercy Iowa City

Many tasks we perform at work such as lifting, reaching, and repeating movements can strain our bodies. Over time, these tasks may lead to injuries of the muscles, tendons, ligaments, nerves, joints, and blood vessels. This type of injury is often referred to as a musculoskeletal disorder (MSD). Such disorders cost our society billions of dollars per year, and account for a large number of injuries in all industries. They often require time off of work or work restrictions, costing both the employer and the worker.

The first step in reducing MSDs is knowing how to recognize the signs and symptoms. Observable signs include swelling, redness, or difficulty moving. Symptoms that can be felt include numbness, tingling, and pain. Signs and symptoms may appear suddenly, but they are more likely to occur gradually. Workers should be encouraged to seek treatment whenever a sign or symptom appears.

Next, it's important to recognize the risk factors that can contribute to MSDs. These include forceful exertion, static and awkward postures, local contact stress, and frequency or repetitiveness. Other risk factors include the physical arrangement of the work space, physical characteristics of tools or equipment used, environmental conditions, and organization of work tasks. The presence of any one of these risk factors does not guarantee an injury will occur. Other factors play a role, such as the magnitude of the force exerted and the frequency of a task, as well as personal risk factors such as obesity and age. The goal should be to reduce one or more of the risk factors present, thereby reducing the overall risk of injury.

To this end, there are many tools on the Internet to help integrate an ergonomic safety program into your workplace. The Occupational Health and Safety Administration (OSHA) provides a set of Ergonomic eTools that cover a wide variety of industries such as baggage handling, beverage delivery, computer workstations, electrical contractors, grocery warehousing, poultry processing, health-care, printing, and sewing. eTools are stand-alone, interactive, Web-based training tools on occupational safety and health topics. They are highly illustrated and utilize graphical menus. Visit <http://www.osha.gov/dts/osta/oshasoft/index.html#eTools> for more information.

Contact Mercy Occupational Health for information or assistance with your ergonomic concerns.

You are cordially invited to a free educational luncheon:

“Ergonomics: Don’t Let It Become A Pain”

Choose between two times and locations:

Iowa City

Tuesday, November 11, 2008
11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.
Mercy Medical Plaza
540 E. Jefferson St., Iowa City
Lower level, McAuley room
Please RSVP by Friday, Nov. 7.

Send names of attendees to kelly.garvin@mercyic.org or call 319-339-3832.

Muscatine

Wednesday, November 19,
11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.
Pizza Ranch
106 Ford Avenue, Muscatine
Please RSVP by Friday, Nov. 14.

Send names of attendees to kelly.garvin@mercyic.org or call 563-263-3921.

Hosted by:

Mercy Occupational Health Program

Speakers:

Tracy Marker, *Mercy Employee Safety Manager*
Adam Calonder, MSPT, DPT, *Progressive Rehabilitation Associates*

If you are unable to attend, please extend this invitation to your designated company representative.

Pre-employment screening protocols balance employers’ safety, recruiting

By Adam Calonder, MSPT, DPT, *Progressive Rehabilitation Associates*

It is frustrating to hire a new employee only to have him or her quickly report an injury. Whether they were injured at a previous job and failed to inform you, or were never able to perform the job safely, the cost to your organization is the same. A properly designed pre-employment screen



protocol identifies an individual’s ability to perform the physical requirements of a specific job, ensuring a match between workers and work in a non-discriminatory way.

If your business was located on an island by itself, the decision to consider pre-employment screens would be based entirely on your injury rates and the belief that the process would reduce your risk and injury costs. However, if you are in an industry or community where you share an employment pool with other companies, you also need to consider what they are doing. If they are conducting pre-employment screens, their rejected employees will seek employment elsewhere. As more companies implement screens and reject employees, the risks associated with the employment pool increase. Eventually, companies that do not conduct screens will absorb the risk avoided by others.

Mercy Occupational Health works with Progressive Rehabilitation Associates’ ergonomic and work rehab specialists to provide injury prevention opportunities. Through our pre-employment screen services, we make sure that you hire employees who are less prone to injury. Our programs help to:

- Balance the competing needs of safety and recruiting
- Avoid legal risk
- Obtain the highest return on investment
- Minimize workers’ comp payments for pre-existing conditions

We can work with you to understand your list of job descriptions. We work on-site to break each job into a series of critical tasks and measure the physical requirements, which may include such attributes as strength, endurance, aerobic capacity, coordination, and balance. We also review our findings with you, obtain feedback, and validate our conclusions. We use the validated essential function results to design a testing protocol to replicate the physical requirements of the job. We continue to help you organize your data and analyze results, maintaining the delicate balance between recruiting and safety.

For more information, please contact me at 319-339-3611.