



Physiotherapy gets you back on track

PHYSIOTHERAPISTS CAN...

- *Help prevent people becoming unwell and needing sick leave*
- *Get people back to work on full normal duties*
- *Facilitate a managed return to work if alternative or modified duties are required*
- *Deliver a cost effective service*

A personal perspective -

Malcolm was a fit 53-year-old and worked in a warehouse, which involved some moving of heavy machinery. Whilst working he lifted a large box awkwardly and had to stop due to pain in his lower back. Malcolm had to be off work sick. He arranged to see his GP, who validated the illness with a sick note. He was advised to rest and to avoid activity that 'caused the pain'. Whilst the problem improved, the fear of the activity and the fear of relapse developed. He tried to return to work after six weeks, but his employer could not accommodate light duties for him. He went back to the GP and obtained repeat absence notes.

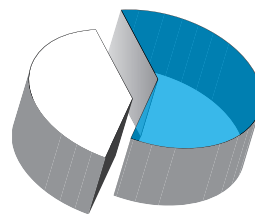
His pay stops at 6 months and he joins the benefits system.

The solution

The Chartered Society of Physiotherapy encourages all employers to consider early and improved access to physiotherapy as one solution to reduce employee absence, and at the same time provide a high quality work environment.

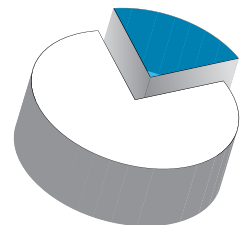
Self referral is a system of access that allows patients to refer themselves directly to a physiotherapist without being prompted by another health professional. This method of access is well

THE EXTENT OF THE UK PROBLEM



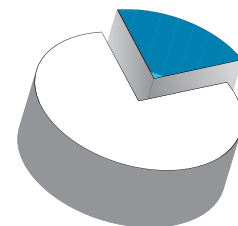
60%

Up to 60% of people on long term sick leave cite Musculoskeletal Disorders (MSDs) as the reason



22%

22% of people on Incapacity Benefit have an MSD



30%

MSDs are the most common reason for repeat consultations with the GP - up to 30% of primary care consultations



Low Back pain is the number one cause of long-term absence amongst manual workers

established in the Independent Sector, and is now recommended throughout the NHS.

Self referral to physiotherapy means that in the early phase of an injury the patient or employee, can access physiotherapy services directly, when prompt treatment has the greatest impact on recovery. For many people this rapid access to support and treatment enables them to remain in or return to work in a timely and safe manner. It prevents short-term sickness absence from progressing to long-term sickness and ultimately worklessness. (*Working for a Healthier tomorrow, Black Report, DH 2008*)

People who self-refer to physiotherapy take fewer days off work (on average 4 days instead of 7) and are 50% less likely to be off work for more than one month when compared with people referred via the more conventional route.

(*Self referral pilots to Musculoskeletal physiotherapy, DH 2008*)

The services physiotherapists can offer include:

- Telephone advice to enable patients to manage their injury more effectively
- Fast access to physiotherapy services, to provide appropriate treatment and advice
- Functional restoration programmes
- Recommendations of workplace adjustments
- Support for reintegration into employment.

To improve NHS staff health, Dr Steve Boorman (2009) recommends

- Early intervention programmes should be available for staff in all trusts
- All staff health services should have self referral
- A national minimum service specification should be introduced for staff health services
- Every NHS board should appoint an executive director to champion staff health
- All NHS organisations should review their funding for staff health services
- Services should only be commissioned from organisations demonstrably committed to staff health.



For further information, please contact
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CASE STUDIES

Claims for back pain slashed ten fold

A Utilities company with 5000 employees

- For every **£1** spent on the Physiotherapy Occupational Health programme the organisation is estimated to have saved between **£1.33** and **£4.14** (median figure of **£2.44**)
- Ill health retirements in the 2 years prior to the programme cost the organisation **£262,584** (4 individuals) and **£80,238** in the 2 years after (1 individual)
- Claims for back pain in the 2 years prior to the programme cost the organisation **£282,016** and **£20,440** in the 2 years after

A return of £5 for every £1 invested

Royal Mail case study

- <http://www.hse.gov.uk/MSD/experience/restoration.htm>
- Before the programme began, the estimated cost to the Royal Mail of the absence and restricted duties of clients in the study group was **£1,384,501**
- Since the programme began this has fallen to **£127,738**
- On the premise that absence and restricted duties would have continued at similar rates without the rehabilitation programme the saving is in excess of **£1 million** a year

40% cut in lost days

West Suffolk Hospital trust, Bury St Edmunds,

achieved savings of **£170,000** through a system of priority referrals to a local physio for injured staff. For a cost of **£21,000** it had achieved a 40% reduction in lost days through sickness absence and savings of **£170,000** in the cost of MSDs

Easy access

Doncaster and Bassetlaw Trust piloted a successful self referral physio service for 6500 staff in 2005.

The service was made permanent after an evaluation identified potential savings of more than **£330,000**. Employees from all corners of the trust use it, and it offers an average waiting time of 2.8 days. More than half the users say they would have taken time off work if the service were not available.

Halving sickness absence for MSDs

Gloucestershire County Occupational health services

introduced a physiotherapist to assess MSDs in May 2006. The service costs **£16,000** a year and consists of a physio working two days a week. It achieved recognition in Boorman for having cut average sick days for MSDs from 13.6 to 6.8 days.