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Supporting the Weekend Warriors on your team

How to help minimize injury-related absenteeism



Dr. Gerry Ramogida was the chiropractor/lead performance therapist for San Francisco's Golden State Warriors for four seasons.

By Karin Rego

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Companies and HR leaders have come a long way in creating workplace cultures that support holistic wellness and balance because if today's research has taught employers anything, it's that all work and no play leads to far more significant implications than dull conversation.

Whether it is the Super Bowl, World Cup, or the Olympics, it is natural to get inspired by our athletic heroes. Employees who have goals outside of work that include regular

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sports medicine advisor who was the chiropractor for the Seattle Seahawks for 17 seasons and chiropractor/lead performance therapist for San Francisco's Golden State Warriors for four seasons. "This is someone who fits an entire week's recommended level of exercise into one or two days."



Doctor of Chiropractic Gerry Ramogida, former Seattle Seahawks chiropractor and lead performance therapist for the Golden State Warriors says reducing musculoskeletal (MSK) conditions should be a workplace priority.

Any healthy level of physical activity can trigger an injury. What can HR managers do to support team members beyond the 9 to 5? For starters, equip leadership with a better understanding of MSK injuries and treatments.

US sports and recreational injury data from 2021 reveals emergency room visits resulting from sports activities were the highest among the 25 - 64-year-old demographic. Most frequently reported injuries were musculoskeletal (MSK), and included lower back pain, muscle strain, sprains, disc injury, and common overuse injuries involving Achilles tendonitis, tennis elbow, and rotator cuff impingement.

And while many believe resting an injury to let the muscles and tissues heal is the best course of treatment, Ramogida says this approach merely sets the individual up for a second, and possibly more serious injury.

"Tissues need proper movement, not rest, to deliver the stress that directs healing," says

Ramogida. "Whether it's a tendon, a muscle, or a ligament, a process called mechanotransduction dictates that appropriately directed movement stimulates the associated tissue cells which in turn causes these cells to produce more of the material needed to heal the injured area. Muscular contraction also helps pump fluid and swelling out of the way faster. The sooner you can get someone moving appropriately after an MSK injury, the sooner the healing process can begin."

The key here is appropriate movement.

Chiropractic doctors are extensively trained in the assessment, diagnosis, management and prevention of biomechanical disorders originating from the muscular, skeletal, and nervous system. They specialize in hands-on, non-invasive, drug-free approaches to treatment that expedite healing. Depending on the province, they can also provide nutritional advice and therapeutic modalities that include ultrasound, muscle stimulation, and acupuncture.

"A doctor of chiropractic treats all types of injuries, ranging from sprains and strains, to overuse injuries, to concussions," says Ramogida, who notes early diagnosis, and an

appropriate treatment plan not only optimizes physical healing but can also sustain mental wellness.

“Exercise is the most simple, effective, and available means of managing stress that we have.

When we lose our ability to take part in the physical activities we enjoy, it robs us of the most effective tool available to us to help us maintain or improve our emotional wellbeing,” he says.

What the data tells us

MSK conditions impose the largest burden of illness on the Canadian economy and are the second largest source of workplace absenteeism, according to the Canadian Chiropractic Association (CCA).

Fifty per cent of today’s workers have experienced an increase in MSK pain over the course of the “new normal” while close to 73 per cent of chronic pain sufferers say their pain interferes with their work and 65 per cent of employees with chronic pain also experience mental health issues such as depression.

An Ontario Workplace Safety and Insurance Board study revealed employees with lower back pain who were treated by a chiropractor returned to work faster.

An equal opportunity injury

Although many MSK injuries are the result of high intensity training or over exertion, some have more prosaic beginnings that nonetheless have an equally negative impact on an employee’s daily life. An individual can sustain an MSK injury by lifting a heavy object, from sitting hunched over a computer for an extended period, day after day, or simply from carrying out their regular daily routines.

“At my previous practice, our motto was ‘Life Is a Sport,’” says Ramogida, who practices a chiropractic model that involves multiple accessible services and mirrors what a professional athlete receives. “Whether a patient is a pro athlete, training for the Iron Man in Kona, or they’ve injured their rotator cuff from a pickup game of football on the weekend, treatment plans for their goals and the progressions are mapped out in the same way.”

At many companies, paramedical benefit maximums have remained static for the past 20 years, falling far behind inflation. The result is many workers today have less coverage than their parents’ generation.

Ramogida says he’s seen instances where employees who were on the path to recovery were forced to discontinue treatment because their benefits ran out, leaving them vulnerable to a second injury and/or long-term MSK-related problems. “This should be a significant consideration when planning workplace benefits,” says Ramogida.

Injuries happen, however, companies offering paramedical benefits coverage built to see an employee through their required course of treatment are in the best position to retain a healthy team of employees and enjoy a holistically resilient workforce.

“These types of benefits are not an expense,” says Ramogida. “They’re an investment.”

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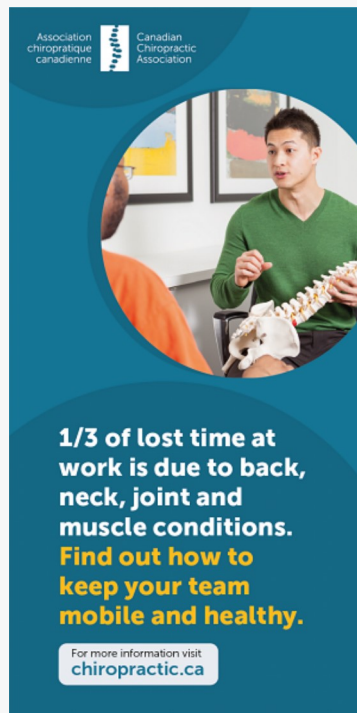
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