

## Cumulative Trauma

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There needs to be an explanation of what and why there is treatment for cumulative trauma. I maintain that soft tissue work (i.e., friction massage, trigger point therapy, and manipulation of restricted joint play) can be viewed as preventing the pathology from occurring. Remember that as you explain this concept to those individuals concerned in human resources or safety areas, you may use the time line equation that Dr. Faye so often discusses, which is:

Biomechanics --> Altered Biomechanics --> Pathology

<-- Slow and/or Reverse the Process

This concept is well received and understood by individuals who are no longer satisfied with waiting until surgery is needed to address the problem. Good managers service their equipment (assets) on a cost per basis instead of allowing the entire machinery to be ruined and replaced. Hence, the same concept for their employees with cumulative trauma insult.

Here is an excerpt of a letter that is given to employees to begin to educate them on prevention measures (in-house) and their responsibilities to all concerned.

Dear Employee:

I am addressing the issue of work and its relationship to the worker. Please take the time to read what follows:

Any repetitive motion, whether building seats or scraping the paint, if done long enough, will adversely stress the muscles, tendons and joints that are of primary use in accomplishing the job. When these structures become tight they do not function correctly and usually become sore as well. If this condition persists long enough (years) damage may not be reversible. (A good analogy would be a tire out of balance; if let go long enough this would cause the front-end of the car to be ruined -- the human body doesn't have parts that can be replaced very well. However, if this condition is detected early and prevented from progressing, muscles and tendons can be returned to the original state. When a system is under constant demand it needs to be taken care of, just as when continual driving of a car means the oil must be changed more -- closer attention must be given to all its moving parts.

Very often, when a person begins hurting, he is taken off his regular job; this has a two-fold impact: First, the person is allowed to rest (this is the positive side). Secondly, additional demands are placed on the fellow workers causing them to be more susceptible to hurting (this is the down side). When the person recovered is placed back on his regular job, he often finds himself on the receiving end of the extra work, because one of the other people is now hurting. This cycle gets worse and worse, involving more and more people, creating a very tough work environment for everyone. This program is being established to interrupt this cycle. It is not going to eliminate normal fatigue and soreness; this should be expected due to the physical nature of the job. However, realize that athletes feel the same way after a race, but that is a part of the race.

The program that began in its infancy last fall at xxxxxxxxx depends on the cooperation of all of us, not only to reduce pain, but to keep you fit, just as an athlete does, so the job or race can be performed safely and productively.

If the athlete does not do certain things such as stretching, increase blood flow to the tissues to prepare them for the workout they will receive, he knows that an injury may very well occur. They also have trainers that use sophisticated procedures to relax muscles and tendons when they are tight, instead of waiting for the area to be injured and then need prolonged recovery time.

I have been associated with sports medicine and you do yourself a disservice when you don't consider yourself a "competition athlete," because you are. Your physical demands are no less strenuous than someone running the 220 yard dash. You just do it all day long. If you plan on doing labor throughout your life, you need to take care of yourself wherever you work, and this program, I believe, will give you a chance to help yourself make your life a little easier. Most of us cannot change our lifestyles too much for whatever reasons, so this is it. Our life is what we live day-to-day; life is not waiting to win the lottery -- at least it shouldn't be.

Let me summarize what I wanted to say:

You should consider yourself a world class athlete in what you do. Your job is demanding and you need to take care of yourself.

By participating in the injury prevention program you will reduce some of the day to day discomforts of work and maintain your work capabilities for a lifetime of service.

Not everyone will agree with this thought process but, as I said, this is life. Has somebody made a better suggestion for helping keep the service you have to offer functional and in one piece?

The therapy is designed to do certain things for you; however, your active participation in the program is what will make the real difference to you.

My next article will concern itself with specific stretching exercises and diagrams that can be used as a handout to the employees.

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