Work Transition Tips for Workers

Lynn Shaw, Dr., Western University
Work transition tips: Helping workers get the right information at the right time

Trying to make sense of the vast amount of information needed to live with chronic pain or a chronic work injury/disability is overwhelming. People who play a role in helping persons with work injuries and chronic conditions sort out information and what it means to their daily and work life are people who counsel or advise a worker one-on-one, run support groups and health care professionals.

Most of these people do the best that they can to offer knowledge on health matters, coping with change, uncertainty, claims issues, and work issues. Unfortunately, most people who offer informational supports do not have any training in the theory or principles of knowledge transfer – how to make sure that people can use and understand the information they need. As a result, persons with chronic conditions and work loss often get information at different times, mixed messages about what they need to know, do not always know what information is useful or how to use the information to make the best decisions and choices. Thus, the information workers need comes at the wrong time making it difficult to complete documentation on time, adjust their health and daily routines, to get better and to plan for going back to work.

Training in how to share knowledge for support groups and health professionals is needed to develop better practices and approaches to help workers use the information they need when they need it.

Research [1,2] suggests that persons with chronic conditions and work injuries:

- Struggle to use information as they do not get information on time.
- Become skeptical of the information they receive due to mixed messages and do not know what information is useful or correct.
- Persistently try to find the information need they talk with others and search the internet.
- Need to think about and plan for the present and the ‘what if’s’ such as the uncertainties of living with less income, and periods of good or ill health.

Research [1—4] suggests that information needs to be accessible, simple, and persons who have chronic conditions and work injuries must be given time to think on information so that they can use it. If you work with injured workers we encourage you to read, reflect, and use some of these steps to enhance what you currently do to help workers access the information they need. Once you have tried some of these we encourage you to talk with others and pass on what works!

Step 1 Provide Access to Information

- Ensure that information is available in different formats.
- Ensure that information is shared in a way that meets each person’s learning needs.