

How to Decide When to Bring Physical Therapy Onsite at Your Business
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In a recent article in the January 12th, 2007 issue of the Wall Street Journal it was reported that direct referral to physical therapy can save thousands of dollars when prescribed first, in the majority of cases, rather than going through the traditional rounds of diagnostic testing and physician visits. Starbucks, Costco Wholesale Corp. and Nordstrom Inc. all took part in the study which was conducted in the State of Washington and which showed the significant savings.

In our own practice we have an onsite clinic in a national trucking company's local office and we have seen the impact first hand that having direct access to physical therapy onsite can have. Luckily in the State of North Carolina, individuals have direct access to physical therapy services without a physician referral. What this means is that you can have a physical therapist onsite at your organization that can see your employees and determine who needs to be referred offsite to another healthcare provider.

Some of the benefits for employers to have onsite physical therapy include cost containment, reduced lost time and increased productivity, improved employee morale, and overall more healthy employees to name a few. Just some of the duties physical therapists can perform while onsite include office and non-traditional workspace ergonomic assessments, they can help write job descriptions based on actual physical demands required on the job, perform pre-employment physical capacity screens, perform physical therapy services for employees hurt at work or even at home, and can provide information on health and wellness including stretching programs, weight loss initiatives and body mechanics instruction to employees.

When looking for a physical therapy provider to assist your organization onsite you should contact a company that has experience working with businesses in occupational medicine. A local company in which the therapists are owners and operators will ensure that you get top notch service because they have a vested interest in seeing that their work exceeds your expectations. There are additional certifications that therapists may hold in regards to ergonomics, functional job analysis, functional capacity evaluations, and manual therapy techniques. You will want to come up with a list of areas where you think your organization would benefit from a physical therapist prior to contacting providers in your area. What this will do is allow you to match a provider to your needs rather than just trying to fit any provider to your business.

One last thing to remember is that physical therapy is not for everyone. A physical therapist may still have to refer people in your organization to outside providers, but at least they will be able to monitor your business from a healthcare standpoint and be able to provide direction for issues that fall out of their scope of practice.