



## Service Priorities and Programmes Electronic Presentations

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### **A 6 year Return to Work Journey**

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### **Introduction**

Disability management (DM) is a proactive process in the workplace designated to facilitate impaired staff getting back to work. Return to work (RTW) is a process influenced by a multitude of biomedical and psychosocial factors. This is a case study illustrating how the injured staff, OMCS, supervisors, co-workers and therapist work together to facilitate a concerned staff with chronic pain and depression to work at her optimal functional level for 6 years before retirement at age 57.

### **Objectives**

1)Help injured staff to resume a worker's role and regain productivity through appropriate work accommodation that match with her physiological and psychological capabilities. 2)Help injured staff to maintain occupational health and identify personal goals

### **Methodology**

The study case is a workman working in catering department who sustained a neck injury at work in 2010. Neck surgery was done on early 2011. Obstacles affecting her RTW include fear of re-injury, poor coping skills, mistrust, mismatch between her work capacity and the required job demand at her post. Key concerns and needs of her were identified through communication among key stakeholders. In the DM program, OMCS and workplace supervisors worked closely to provide job coaching and onsite assessment that facilitates assignment of manageable job tasks for her, in which peers support is critical. A caring approach was adopted that we focus on staff encouragement, empowerment and engagement with realistic goal settings. In view of her poor psychological capability, counseling was an indispensable component in her 6 year RTW journey. Cognitive behavior therapy and life coaching techniques were adopted to help her identify realistic personal goals and make timely decision.

### **Result**

Even if the significant mismatch between her work capacity and the required job demand, she was able to resume modified duty under the DM program in 8 month time after neck surgery. Sickness absence dropped significantly from 246.5 days in

2012 to 28.5 days in 2014. The success is driven from the joint effort among all the key stakeholders with management support. With our continuous psychological support and guidance, she regained her confidence during the RTW journey and opted for early retirement to start the new page in her life in 2015