Y-12 National Security Complex

Can this Employee Return Safely to Work?
A Framework for Managing an Aging Workforce

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Otis Cosby, MD, MSPH

Dr. Cosby is currently the Medical Director of Occupational Health Services at B&W Y-12 National Security Complex in Oak Ridge, Tennessee, where he has served in this role since October, 2004. He is primarily responsible for oversight of the clinic operation and works to ensure that high quality occupational health services are delivered to the 5,000 employees at the site. Prior to his position at Y-12, Dr. Cosby was the director and an assistant professor in the Division of Occupational and Environmental Medicine at Meharry Medical College in Nashville, Tennessee. Additional roles during his tenure at Meharry included an assignment as the Civil Service Medical Examiner for the Metro Nashville City government employees, the Employee Health physician for the Alvin C. York Veteran Affairs Hospital in Murfreesboro, Tennessee, and numerous consulting positions with local industries including the General Electric Motors plant in Murfreesboro, Tennessee, the General Motors Corvette Assembly plant in Bowling Green, Kentucky, the Tennessee State Disability Determination Service and the TRW Commercial Steering Gear plant in Lebanon, Tennessee (through the Whole Health Management company).
Dr. Cosby (continue)

Dr. Cosby is board-certified in Occupational Medicine and is a past-president of the Tennessee College of Occupational and Environmental Medicine. He is a fellow in the American College of Occupational and Environmental Medicine and is currently an adjunct associate professor in the School of Graduate Studies and Research at Meharry Medical College.

Mary Benton, PhD, MPH, RN

Dr. Benton is currently the Health Promotions Coordinator at B&W Y-12 National Security Complex and is primarily responsible for on-site chronic disease management programs, disability management and productivity initiatives. She has been an employee working in various capacities for DOE/NNSA in Oak Ridge, Tennessee for the past 19 years and 12 of those years have been spent at Y-12 as a compliance training manager, human resources manager for critical thinking skills mentoring and job rotation programs, a Behavior-Based Safety (BBS) internal consultant and a member of the Safe Work Improvements Group.
Authors Biographies (continue)

**Dr. Benton (continue)**

Dr. Benton received a PhD degree in Community Health and Human Factors Engineering and a Masters Degree in Public Health (MPH) from the University of Tennessee-Knoxville. She is also a licensed registered nurse (RN) with clinical experience in intensive care, coronary care, and orthopedic nursing.

**Levette Harris-Bethea, BS**

Mrs. Harris-Bethea is currently the Wellness Coordinator at B&W Y-12 and has served in this role for the past two (2) years. She is responsible for managing and coordinating activities and facilities instrumental in the implementation and maintenance of the health and productivity management program at Y-12. She has over 11 years of experience in health science education and health promotion and began her career as a corporate wellness coordinator at the Bay Medical HealthPlex in Panama City, Florida. Levette is a 1997 graduate of the University of Florida (Gainesville) where she earned a bachelor of science degree in Health Science Education with an emphasis in corporate wellness. She currently holds certifications by the American College of Exercise as both a Group Fitness Instructor and a Personal Trainer.
Outline of Presentation

I. Background on an Aging Workforce - Cosby

II. Case Presentation - Cosby

III. Return to Work (RTW) Process - Benton

IV. Wellness Program – Bethea

V. Conclusion - Cosby

VI. Questions - All
Background on an Aging Workforce (Cosby)

• What is the senior workers’ composition of the workforce?

• What are the expected signs and symptoms associated with aging?

• What are some general challenges for employers (ADA, productivity levels, medical insurance coverage)?

• What is a framework for addressing RTW issues in older workers (a Y-12 approach)?
Case Presentation (Cosby)

- Mr. T.B. is a 65 year old gentleman who presents to Occupational Health Services.
  - **Occupation:** safety engineer
  - **Time off:** three (3) months
  - **Medical Conditions:** uncontrolled hypertension, osteoarthritis, status/post bilateral cataract surgery, and depression
  - **Temporary restrictions:** limited walking, work half-days for 2 weeks-then a regular work shift, no lifting over 10 lbs., and no excessive stooping or bending.

- Mr. T.B. is eager to return to work and has expressed an interest in the new wellness program and has received written permission from his primary care physician (PCP) to use the fitness facility.
Return To Work Process (Benton)

- Employee health conditions/temporary medical restrictions reviewed
- Decision to accommodate employee
  - Benefits plan medical case review meeting held
  - Transitional work-job task bank reviewed
  - RTW Plan developed (next page)
  - Physical demands of job reviewed
  - Progress reviewed/modifications made as needed
  - Rehabilitation services considered
Return to Work Process: Details of Work Plan (Benton)

• Phased return to work/transcribe the job-task entries into work plan
  – Job description
  – Required training
  – Medical restrictions/limitations
  – Start date/expected end date
  – Tasks/physical demands required
  – Age related safety or health considerations; co-morbidities

• Recovery progress and medical restrictions review

**Overall goal:**
Return to pre-injury/pre-illness job (with or without accommodations) and perform tasks in a safe manner.
Wellness Program (Bethea)

- Unique challenges
- Necessary interventions
  - Programming
  - Staff recommendations
  - Equipment requirements
Wellness Program: Cardiovascular equipment (Bethea)

- Should minimize impact on the joints
- Should be easy to get on and off
- Should be durable
- Should be Physical Therapy compatible
Wellness Program: Dashboard Entertainment (Bethea)

- Safer
- Less Distracting
- Educational
Wellness Program: Flexibility (Bethea)

- Easy to access
- Safe
- Educational
- Small footprint
Conclusion: Can this Employee Return Safely to Work? (Cosby)

- Consider all factors in the RTW process for individual employees (i.e. legal issues, job placement, levels of productivity, continued well-being)

- Implement plant-wide programs to improve health and productivity

- Support efforts to increase research on an aging workforce and to identify best practices in addressing employer concerns

- Special Note: Mr. T.B. is doing well and has decided to become a ‘body-builder’.
Questions?

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