Helping people back to work

What research is telling employers

Dr Mary Wyatt
Key intent from this talk

The workplace provides the most cost effective opportunity to lessen work disability

Two studies
1. RTW Survey analysis
2. Workplace intervention

Key workplace approaches
Study 1 - RTW Survey
Survey of approx 9300 injured workers across Australia

Conducted for Safe Work Australia
Research analysis of workers’ RTW results, and views on their RTW experiences
Psychological claims and physical claims
With Dr Tyler Lane of ISCRR (stats), and research review of psych by Dr Peter Cotton (clinical and org psychologist)
Summary report for employers to be published in next few months
Employers play a key role

*RTW by how employers respond to the injury*

Positive response from employer, RTW is:

- **43%** higher in *physical* claims (87% versus 61%)
- **65%** higher in *psychological* claims (76% versus 46%)

![Graph showing RTW by Employer response to injury](image-url)
## Employee experiences

Percentage who reported employer responded positively

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Employer response questions</th>
<th>Physical</th>
<th>Psychological</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Your employer did what they could to support you</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employer made an effort to find suitable employment for you</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employer provided enough information on rights and responsibilities</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your employer helped you with your recovery</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your employer treated you fairly DURING the claims process</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your employer treated you fairly AFTER the claims process</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Making contact pays off

RTW by employee contact from the workplace

Employees who advise their workplace has made contact about their injury are more likely to be at work.

Early contact (within 3 days from claim lodgement) is associated with further increases in RTW:

- 26% higher physical claim (88% vs 70%)
- 63% higher psychological claim (80% vs 49%)
Contact from the workplace

Employee experiences

58% of employees with a **physical injury claim** say their **employer made contact** with them about their injury.

Only 35% of employees with a **psychological claim** say their **employer made contact** about their injury.

Of those who say they heard from their employer:

- **34%** with a **physical claim** had contact from their employer **within 7 days** of reporting their injury
- Only **11% of those with a psychological claim** heard from their employer **within 7 days**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Days from injury to claim</th>
<th>Non psychological</th>
<th>Psychological</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than 7 days</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 - 13 days</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 - 20 days</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Concern about lodging a claim

Low levels of concern about lodging a claim associated with higher RTW result for both groups

Difference greater for psychological claims
Employee view of workplace culture

Prior to injury

Workplace culture prior to the injury impact on RTW greater in physical claims

More positive view of work and work environment associated with RTW:

- 25% higher physical claims (79% vs 63%)
- 10% higher psychological claims (57% vs 52%)
Higher medical focus on RTW associated with 7% higher rate of RTW for physical claims

The number of psychological claims was too small to provide reliable results in the analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percent who agreed with medical focus on RTW questions</th>
<th>Non psychological</th>
<th>Psychological</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Medical treatment assisted you in RTW?</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>87%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clearly communicate options for staying/returning to work?</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work with others to assist your recovery</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explain the role that work could play in your recovery?</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical certificates clearly stating capacity for work?*</td>
<td>96%</td>
<td>98%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Early assistance is worthwhile

Pre claim assistance from employer associated with higher RTW for both groups:

- **19%** higher physical claims (83% vs 70%)
- **33%** higher psychological claims (72% vs 54%)
Early injury reporting

Claims that are lodged early are associated with higher RTW

**Physical**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Days from Injury</th>
<th>Less than 7 days</th>
<th>7 - 13 days</th>
<th>14 - 20 days</th>
<th>21 - 27 days</th>
<th>28 - 35 days</th>
<th>36 - 42 days</th>
<th>43 - 49 days</th>
<th>50 - 56 days</th>
<th>57 - 63 days</th>
<th>64 - 70 days</th>
<th>71 - 77 days</th>
<th>78 - 84 days</th>
<th>Over 180 days</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RTW</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>40%</td>
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**Psych**

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<th>Days from Injury</th>
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<td>69%</td>
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<td>57%</td>
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**RTW by Days from Injury to Claim**

- Physical
- Psych
Disputes

When a dispute was present, RTW less likely in both psychological and physical claims.

No dispute (versus a dispute) RTW:
• 22% higher physical claims
• 31% higher in psychological claims
Putting it all together

RTW by Key Influencing Factors
Physical Claims

RTW by Key Influencing Factors
Psychological Claims

At work at time of survey

40% 45% 50% 55% 60% 65% 70% 75% 80% 85% 90%

Employer response to injury
Early contact from workplace vs no contact
Employer pre claim assistance
Disagreement / dispute
Concern about lodging a claim
Workplace culture prior to injury
Interaction with system/claims organisation
Resilience
Med care focused on RTW

At work at time of survey

40% 45% 50% 55% 60% 65% 70% 75% 80% 85% 90%

Employer response to injury
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Resilience
Opportunities

- Workplace
- Policy makers
- Life insurance industry
Study 2 - RTW Intervention

Evaluation of approx 9300 injured workers across Australia

Workplace based intervention
Early proactive supportive approach
Avoidance of disputes
Supervisor involvement
Skilled ‘RTW Coordinator’ (case management)
Streamlined medical care (avoiding delays and aiding the treater)

IAIABC Journal Spring, 2013 Vol. 50, No. 1. Improving Return to Work Results: It Pays To Care

Workplace intervention

Days lost from work

Control

Intervention

Pre intervention period

Intervention period

36
30
34
14
Workplace intervention

Average claims costs

Pre-intervention period | Intervention period
---|---
Control: $5,799 | $6,019
Intervention: $5,850 | $3,913
## Key workplace approaches

**What can workplaces do**

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<td>Contact, especially early contact</td>
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Skilled RTWCs / Case managers

- Set up systems
- Manage cases
- Support supervisors
- Influence the workplace
- Early contact
- Avoid disputes
How to train RTW Coordinators

- Formal training
- Case discussion
- Mentoring
- Understanding cost and savings
- Initial training
- PIEF
- RTWMatters
Senior manager engaged
= organisation engaged

How to engage

How they can lead

+ $

Understand the costs and benefits of managing employee health
• Premium costs
• Indirect costs
• Claims costs dashboard
• Impact on premium calculator
• Cost calculator

• Leading by example – eg calling the worker
• Ask managers about key issues
• Practicing active safety leadership.

Be Bold
(Up management)
Influencing the (line) manager – why?

Study one – IWH systematic review

- Educating supervisors and managers
- Is one of the seven workplace based interventions that makes a difference

Study two – Liberty Mutual

- 47% reduction in new claims and an 18% reduction in active lost-time claims
- Versus 27% and 7%, respectively, in the control group

Supervisors and return to work

A supervisor’s role is to develop employees and monitor their performance.

In pivotal position to observe

• changes in behaviour
• physical, mental and personal problems
• for employees returning to work

Early

• recognition of problems,
• intervention and support
How to train supervisors

- Case discussion
- Formal training
- Use of questionnaire
- Use of survey
- Talk money
- Involve their boss
Summary

The workplace provides the most cost effective opportunity to lessen work disability

1. RTW Survey analysis shows the greatest influencing factor is the workplace
2. Workplace intervention – 58% reduction in days lost, 38% reduction in claims costs