

REFERRAL FORM

Name of Patient: _____ Date seen: _____

Chief complaint: _____

Work history: _____

Is this possibly a work-related condition? _____ Yes _____ No

Reasons for suspecting work-related: _____

Additional follow-up needed: _____

Clinician name: _____ Signature: _____ Date: _____



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A Practical Guide for
Health Professionals

PROVIDING
MEDICAL CARE FOR
JOB-RELATED INJURIES
AND ILLNESSES



WAS THE PATIENT HURT AT WORK? IS THIS ILLNESS RELATED TO THE PATIENT'S JOB?

Injured workers are entitled to receive prompt diagnosis and treatment for job-related medical conditions. State laws require most employers to carry workers' compensation insurance that pays for necessary diagnostic, therapeutic, and rehabilitative services. The workers' compensation system is designed to ensure that injured workers get appropriate medical care quickly, without having to take legal action.

In reality, workers are frequently unable to obtain appropriate medical services for occupational conditions.. There are many potential barriers to getting proper care, such as:

- The patient might not realize that the medical problem is caused by working conditions.
- The patient might be afraid to say that the problem is work-related, for fear of being fired or other repercussions.
- The patient might not know about workers' compensation insurance, or the need to file special claims forms.
- The patient might have been directed to go to an unfamiliar medical provider, whom they don't know or trust.

YOU CAN HELP

Clinicians must be careful not to create additional barriers for patients trying to get appropriate care for occupational conditions. Problems might develop if practitioners:

- fail to recognize a disorder as work-related
- are reluctant to accept workers' compensation cases
- do not understand the medical, rehabilitative, and wage-replacement benefits that patients are entitled to under workers' compensation laws

As a health professional, you have a major role to play in helping injured workers get appropriate and timely care. Here are some ways you can help:

Take a work history. Find out about the patients' job demands and vocational experiences.

Tell the patient about workers' compensation. If you suspect that the condition might be work-related, encourage the patient to talk to their employer and file a workers' compensation claim.

Don't be judgmental. Few workers' compensation claimants are malingerers or cheats. Most have legitimate complaints.

If necessary, refer patients to other qualified clinicians. Injured workers can often benefit from contacting occupational medicine specialists and experienced rehabilitation therapists.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

- Q Why not just provide medical care under the conventional health insurance plan?**
- A** The patient may not receive appropriate wage-replacement and rehabilitation benefits unless the condition is recognized as work-related and a claim filed under workers' compensation. Also, information about occupational disorders is needed for prevention and surveillance purposes.
- Q Must I fill out special forms?**
- A** Yes, usually you must send a "First Report of Injury" form to the patient's employer and/or insurer.
- Q What if I cannot determine whether the condition was caused occupationally?**
- A** If you *suspect* that the disorder was either caused or aggravated by work, it should be reported as a workers' compensation case.
- Q What if the patient cannot remember whether a particular incident precipitated the condition?**
- A** Many occupational injuries and illnesses develop gradually. A specific event or date of injury is not always required.
- Q Must I personally contact the patient's employer?**
- A** No, but sometimes it may be helpful.