



Case Study: A Functional Restoration Program Success Story!

Functional Restoration Programs are ideal for clients who have pain behaviours that are preventing them from returning to work. Proper education and functional exercises are crucial in returning these clients back to their pre-accident status. The following case study illustrates how a functional restoration program was exactly what Ms. Brown needed to safely and successfully return to work and all of her regular activities.

Background -

Ms. Brown is a 24 year old woman who was injured in a motor vehicle accident when she was hit from behind 1 year ago. She suffered a neck injury and was diagnosed with a whiplash disorder II, in addition to a lumbar strain and cervicogenic headaches.

Since the accident Ms. Brown:

- completed 2 courses of physiotherapy, with her last treatment plan denied by the designated assessment centre 2 months ago. She continued to complain of pain with all movements of her lumbar and cervical spines, often stating that her pain levels reach 10 out of 10 on a verbal analogue scale.
- completed a job site analysis performed at her worksite (receptionist at a car dealership). Although the physical demands are light, she stated that the pain in her back and headaches prevent her from returning to work. Ms. Brown's family doctor also stated that pain is the limiting factor for her return to work.
- completed a functional abilities evaluation (FAE) that reported significant pain behaviours and sub-maximal behaviour, in addition to specific weakness in her lower abdominals and shoulder musculature. The report also made reference to her inadequate education regarding hurt versus harm.

An Active Approach – Functional Restoration Program

The insurance adjuster was continuing to pay income replacement benefits for Ms. Brown and decided that an *active* rehabilitation approach was necessary so the adjuster referred her for a functional restoration program:

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Within 48 hours a physiotherapist contacted Ms. Brown to meet in her home. During the initial assessment the physiotherapist assessed her function and discussed the limitations she would have returning to her job, making specific references to the physical demands analysis report. Again, Ms. Brown identified pain, especially when walking and bending, as the limiting factors for return to work. The physiotherapist discussed the concepts of hurt versus harm with Ms. Brown and had her perform movements that were outside of her "safety" zone. The physiotherapist demonstrated how increased muscle tension and pain are connected and the importance of stretching and exercise.

- That afternoon the physiotherapist contacted the Medical Exercise Specialist (MES) to discuss the appropriate exercises for Ms. Brown. In particular the physiotherapist requested the MES work on low lifting movements to prepare Mrs. Brown for picking up objects at work. In addition, a progressive walking program was suggested to improve endurance while at work.
- Over the next 4 weeks the MES worked with Ms. Brown on improving the functional limitations preventing her return to work. Each visit included straightforward discussions regarding time frames for return to work and how she would cope with discomfort at work. Progressive resistance was added to the exercises and soon Ms. Brown was able to walk continuously for 35 minutes without any increase in discomfort.
- After 4 weeks, Ms. Brown was feeling significantly more comfortable with low lifting and standing. As previously identified in the FAE, there were no impairments identified with the exception of lower abdominal weakness. Therefore, the most important factor in assisting Ms. Brown was providing education regarding pain and how to perform her job-related movements, while strengthening her in the most functional manner possible.

A Success Story:

After the 4 weeks, Ms. Brown began a modified return to work program while continuing with 2 more weeks of the functional restoration. 6 weeks after beginning her program Ms. Brown was working full time without any complaints of pain.

For additional information about Functional Restoration Programs,
please contact Sibley & Associates at 1.800.363.8900