

THE 5 BIGGEST MISTAKES MEDICAL PROVIDERS MAKE WHEN WRITING WORK RESTRICTIONS



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1

TAKING WORKERS OFF WORK WITHOUT MEDICAL NECESSITY.



Example: The worker has a hangnail, and the provider removes them from work for two weeks.

Remove workers from work if sending them to work threatens their health/safety, or that of their co-workers.

2

GIVING WORKERS LONG-STANDING RESTRICTIONS WITHOUT OBJECTIVE EVIDENCE OF AN INJURY.

Example: The worker had a grade 1 ankle sprain 7 weeks months ago, but they are still on work restrictions, despite a normal physical exam.

Do not maintain long-standing work restrictions in the absence of objective findings on exam.

3

GIVING RESTRICTIONS THAT ARE TOO RESTRICTIVE.

Example: The worker has a hangnail, and the provider writes “No use of the left hand.”

Make sure the restriction is appropriate for the injury/illness and does not overly restrict what the worker can do.

4

NOT SETTING EXPECTATIONS OF THE RETURN-TO-WORK TIMELINE.



Example: A worker sprains their knee and believes they should be off work for the next 6 months, until they are 100% pain free.

Explain that simple knee strain should resolve within 2-6 weeks, 16 weeks max, at each and every encounter so that the worker understands they will be going back to full duty soon.

5

NOT SLOWLY ADVANCING WORK RESTRICTIONS.

Example: The worker has a complicated injury that has taken them out of work by medical necessity. Instead of gradually returning the worker to work, the provider sends them back to full duty suddenly, just as the worker begins to recover.

A better approach is a slow return to work for complicated injuries. Perhaps begin with limiting the work shift hours. As an example, the initial restriction would be, 'limit shift to 2 hours'. A few weeks later it would become 'limit shift to 4 hours,' and so on. Slowly titrate up until the worker has no time limitations on their shift.

BONUS: 30 MINUTE DISCOVERY CALL

If you want to find out how I can help you solve the above challenges and more, let's hop on a discovery call to help you come up with a suitable plan for your occupational medicine needs.

[Click Here To Schedule Our Discovery Call](#)

