



# RETURN TO WORK AFTER INJURY

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# My Background



- Currently Project Co-ordinator for a Ministry of Health funded Review of Rehabilitation and Habilitation Services.
- Prior experience includes rehabilitation service delivery and case management in a commercial, clinical and govt. setting.
- NZRPN & post graduate studies in Health Case Management

## Return to work after injury - Vocational Rehabilitation

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- Is a process of active change by which a person who has sustained injury regains or acquires and uses the skills necessary to maintain employment, obtain employment or have a capacity to work.

# Purpose of Vocational Rehabilitation




- Expedite return to meaningful employment
- The recovery and or maintenance of work skills
- Minimise workdays lost
- Reduce premature retirement

# Current Environment



- Injury Prevention, Rehabilitation and Compensation [IPRC] Act came into force 1 April 2002
- ACC - The Process
- ACC Partnership Programme

# The Practitioners involved in the return to work



- General Practitioners
- Case Managers
- Rehabilitation Service Providers
- Occupational Physician

# Return to Work - Three Fundamental Questions

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- What is the function required to complete the person's job tasks?
- What function is the person capable of performing?
- What, if anything is needed to restore the person to the necessary level of function?

## Common features of a successful return to work plan

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- Instituted immediately
- Seamless
- Has a functional orientation
- Holistic
- Activity and not time based
- Involves early ergonomic reviews of the work place and work process



## Common features of a successful return to work plan

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- Involves early independent interventions
- Facilitation of primary care providers
- The return to work is actively managed by the person themselves, along with their case manager and employer

# Factors affecting return to work after injury

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- Job satisfaction
- Illness Belief
- Unwieldy & unresponsive systems resulting in a short critical window of opportunity for effective rehabilitation
- Delay in implementing a return to work plan and effective interventions

## Factors affecting return to work after injury

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- Resistance to having workers back at work unless they are fully fit
- Lack of provision of alternative duties
- Likelihood of a successful return to work varies inversely with the duration of period away from work

## Possible Outcomes of ineffective or no vocational rehabilitation

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- Fit workers become physically deconditioned
- Change in mental status typically involving feeling of hopelessness, anxiety and depression
- Loss of work ethic and social status
- Risk of undesirable occupational sequential triad of unemployment, unemployability and invalidity.