



FOCUS

The Psychological Injury

The Statistics

Psychological Injury (PI) is a complex area and continues to receive attention as Workers Compensation Stress claims continue to rise.

Q-Comp reports Statutory claim intimations for PI's increased by 7.5% from 3,412 (08/09) to 3,667 (09/10). Statistics show that this figure is largely represented by females (60.2%) compared with males (39.8%). Out of these figures, the reports show that 14.2% were under 30 years of age, 38% were between 30-44 years of age, 42.1% were between 45-59 years of age and 4.3% were 60+ years. Statutory claim payments for PI were up by 8.4% in 09/10 (41.3 million) compared to 08/09 (38.1 million). (Q-Comp Statistics Report 09/10)

What is a Psychological Injury?

The term Psychological Injury includes clinical DSM-IV diagnoses such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and depression, as well as other emotional reactions or states that are not diagnoses per se yet may substantially compromise an individual's vocational and social functioning (Koch, 2005).

Organisational Risk Factors

It is widely recognised that organisations are continually changing and that the modern workplace is fast paced and complex. Organisations should however be aware of the factors which may contribute to psychological harm and can include:

- Change
- Climate and culture
- Communication
- Co-worker relations
- Critical incidents
- Workplace injury
- Customer relations
- Time Management pressures
- Perceived lack of support
- Harassment and bullying
- Career development
- Performance management
- Workplace roles and responsibilities
- Occupational violence
- Work/life balance



It is recommended (Comcare) that organisations adopt a systematic and structured approach to OH&S risk management which includes PI and should involve:

1. Identifying the sources of potential harm to employee health and wellbeing;
2. Systematically assessing the risk of employees being harmed;
3. Developing and implementing plans to address, reduce and manage PI;
4. Monitor and review the implementation and effectiveness of interventions against PI.

What are the signs of PI?

Psychological Injury can be difficult to detect but there are often subtle signs which may indicate that there may be a problem with stress and/or other workplace issues which is having an effect on someone. These can include:

- A general decline in work performance such as not getting work done, loss of enthusiasm, increase in errors and ability to make decisions;
- Reduced interaction with others including withdrawing from social events or work activities
- Absenteeism or high turnover of staff;
- Physical signs such as being tired or run down
- Emotional behaviour - crying, anger, over-reaction, moodiness, depression and anxiety
- Verbal clues - complaints of 'not coping' and 'feeling stressed'
- Substance abuse - an increase in alcohol, sedatives or other substances

Being Proactive

A number of chronic work stressors leading to PI injuries have been identified and once recognised can be pro-actively managed. Work stressors can include, high workload, unmet needs for training, conflict with fellow workers or management, escalating grievances, job dissatisfaction through lack of recognition and promotion opportunities, violence in the workplace, critical incidents, high demands and very high responsibilities, lack of support in one's position, chronic turnover in managers and job uncertainty (Dollard, Winefield & Winefield, 1999). Catalyst can provide a number of organisational strategies to prevent PI including:

- Workplace education and training;
- Assessment of workplace culture and climate;
- Reviewing policies and procedures including OH&S management systems
- Providing development programs to improve leadership and people management
- Mediating for workplace conflict and facilitating workplace relations;
- Attending to Critical Incidents and providing ongoing counselling;
- Promoting supportive environments which do not accept bullying or harassment;

CIM now has a dedicated Allied Health team that can assist employees/insurers in the following areas:

**Early Intervention
Injury Prevention Training
Injury Management
Case Management
Physical Conditioning
Vocational Assessments
Job Placement
Host Employment / Work Trials
RTW Co-ordination Services**



BEENLEIGH

Shop 4b
20 Main Street
Beenleigh QLD 4207
P: (07) 3807 5559
F: (07) 3807 4009

CARINA

Shop 2a
805 Old Cleveland Rd
Carina QLD 4152
P: (07) 3843 1981
F: (07) 3843 1982

CRESTMEAD

Logan Metro Sports Centre
357 Browns Plains Rd
Browns Plains QLD 4132
P: (07) 3807 5559
F: (07) 3807 4009

E: admin@catalystim.com.au E: carina@catalystim.com.au E: admin@catalystim.com.au