



The Importance of Effective Functional Capacity Evaluation





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When a sports person is injured their fitness to return to play is generally determined jointly by the medical and coaching staff. Generally a player will have to pass a detailed physical examination together with a graded return to play (usually through structuring their training).

Given the massive costs of workplace musculoskeletal injuries it continues to disappoint that this approach is not taken in the workplace. Medical personnel still apply guesswork in determining work capacity and employers struggle to find a graded set of duties. This is understandable as many workplaces can't practically provide light duties.

There are 2 solutions to this problem.

1. A graded return to work duties can be simulated in an area outside of work such as a rehabilitation facility. This should be professionally prescribed and supervised.
2. A Functional Capacity Evaluation can be undertaken to determine work capacity

The advantages of using an FCE are:

- It takes much of the guesswork out of the return to work decision
- It promotes worker and employer confidence about work capacity
- It lowers re-injury rates
- It provides a defensible legal record of fitness if a re-injury does occur

There are a number of FCE processes available and Advanced Physiotherapy and Injury Prevention is accredited to provide a number of these.

A Canadian study looked at the return to work rates of 225 people. Half were assessed using an FCE, the other half were assessed using a functional interview. Those in the FCE group had a 15% greater chance of early return to work than the interview alone group.

Another Study by Goss (2007) found that for every \$1 spent on the use of a Short form FCE, \$18 was saved, in terms of insurance premiums and retraining costs.

FCE are not currently covered under the NSW workers compensation system but are recommended strongly for

- Longer term claims
- Difficult claims
- Hard to assess situations
- Workplaces where graded light duties are not available