

Occupational Health Services

Medical and surgical management in every case of industrial injury or disease should aim to restore the disabled worker to his former earning power and occupation as completely as possible and without unnecessary delay. Concise, dependable medical reports that are promptly submitted to those agencies entitled to them are a part of this obligation. In the same way, equitable administration of workmen's compensation rests on medical testimony which adheres closely to reasonable scientific deductions regarding the injury or its possible consequences.

The industrial physician is responsible for maintenance and completeness of medical records. Records and reports are a necessary part of an occupational medical program. Comprehensive records must be kept and reports rendered in order that management be guided in their continuing responsibility for health and safety, and the employees kept informed of the degree of success of the safety program afforded by their cooperation. Records and reports are necessary to direct and evaluate preventive medical and safety engineering techniques. They are necessary to chart progress in the reduction of accidents.

The physician is also responsible for properly instructing nurses and other paramedical personnel (such as first-aiders) and directing their activities. Their duties, therefore, should be described in clear, concisely written directives, a copy of which should be posted in the medical department. There must be no delegation of services requiring expert medical attention.

The industrial physician, nurse, and safety director should concur with management to plan for emergency handling of large numbers of seriously injured employees in the event of disaster, such as explosion, fire, or other catastrophe. These plans should be coordinated with community plans for such events. See "Planning for Emergencies," Chapter 37.

Procedures should include selecting, training, and supervising auxiliary personnel, and should provide for

- 1 Selecting and training auxiliary nursing personnel
- 2 Selecting and training first aid workers

- 3 Transporting and caring for the injured
- 4 Transferring seriously injured to hospitals (where operating rooms and blood transfusions are available, donors could be arranged for)
- 5 Coordinating these plans with the safety department, guards, police, road patrols, fire departments, and other interested community groups

Duties of the occupational health nurse

Occupational health nursing is a specialized branch of the nursing profession. The position requires a registered professional nurse, who is licensed in the state where employed. In addition, it is desirable that the occupational health nurse have some knowledge of workmen's compensation laws, insurance, health and safety laws, occupational diseases, sanitation, first aid, and record keeping.

The occupational health nurse contributes the most when she works with the company physician who provides her with written directives that have been discussed between them, so they are mutually agreed upon and understood.

Working with the physician, the occupational health nurse can provide a variety of nursing services, such as initial care for injuries or illnesses, counseling, health education, consultation about sanitary standards, and referral to community health agencies. She also can participate in programs to evaluate employee health, such as health examinations, or to prevent disease, such as immunizations.

When the physician is only located at the plant part time, the nurse is responsible to him on professional matters, and to a member of management on administrative matters. In this case, the nurse works with the safety director in planning and conducting accident prevention programs.

The occupational health nurse must maintain a confidential professional relationship with the employees in conformity with legal and ethical codes. She may not divulge information contained in individual employee health records unless the employee gives his signed permission, the medical files are only accessible to medical personnel.

It must be clear that establishment of medical diagnosis and definition of treatment are