

Osteopathy at Standard Life

Andrew Moore, Occupational Health Manager, Standard Life

Background

Standard Life introduced an osteopathic service into the organisation in 1999. Early in that year, Occupational Health (OH) had reviewed the sickness absence statistics company-wide, in relation both to managerial and self-referrals to Occupational Health. We found that around 25% of absence and referrals to OH related to some



form of musculo-skeletal disorder – back, neck or upper limb problems. The nature of our business means a large percentage of our employees work 9-5pm and are in a static position for most of these hours, so prevalence of these conditions came as little surprise. The review got us thinking about how best we could tackle the problem.

To coincide with this review, Occupational Health registered the Company for the Scottish Health at Work award scheme (SHAW). This scheme is run in conjunction with the Health Education Board for Scotland (HEBS) and is tiered in a 3-stage award programme – Bronze, Silver and Gold. Standard Life achieved the Gold standard award in the summer of 2002. To qualify for the award scheme, a company needs to look at best practice and implement changes in the workplace in relation to health promotion and health education of the staff. The programme helped us formalise and introduce some treatment options – such

as osteopathy. (The SHAW programme is also a great stage on which to promote the benefits of osteopathy.)

Introducing the osteopathic service further helped us to proactively manage, treat and advise employees who were experiencing musculo-skeletal problems – to help reduce the incidence of time lost due to

illness and, hopefully, prevent employees taking sickness leave in the first place.

Where

We introduced the osteopathic service first to our main head office building at Lothian Road, Edinburgh. This site was chosen as it accommodated the Occupational Health Department and also had the largest number of employees based there (approximately 2000 staff). Within 18 months the service was extended to the second largest head office building, at our Tanfield site. Again this building housed a large number of staff.

A free advice clinic is incorporated into the scheme and held once a week, enabling employees to speak directly with a qualified osteopath about the problems they are experiencing and decide whether or not treatment would be a preferred option.

How

The service is run in conjunction with the Company's private healthcare scheme, for which all employees are

eligible to register. The referral route is mainly via GP letter, although Occupational Health practitioners directly refer some cases and the Occupational Health Nursing Practitioners will also promote and prompt employees to attend the free clinic. Employees ring Active X Osteopaths direct to book an appointment, so little Occupational Health administration time is spent booking and chasing up appointments.

Promotion of the service

Promotion of the osteopathic service is mainly via the Company's intranet site, with a page detailing the service set up under Occupational Health. Active X Osteopaths, under the guidance of their Director, Gavin Routledge, attend in-house Health Promotion days and the annual Health Fayre held at Head Office. Other ad-hoc promotion within the company is arranged throughout the year to help raise awareness of the service. Gavin Routledge has developed and delivered health education presentations and, where necessary, will work with Occupational Health if any work-related issues need to be advised on or resolved.

Review of the service

The Company's Occupational Health Manager meets with the Director Gavin Routledge on a monthly basis to

discuss the service and its utilisation. The osteopathic service routinely collects the following patient data:

- Name, department and staff number.
- Age.
- Diagnosis.
- Work-related condition?
- Employee has had time off work?
- Has intervention prevented time off work?
- Patient on sick leave and about to return to work?

There is good evidence to suggest that early intervention has helped prevent time being lost from work. For the employer, an added benefit is that time is not lost from the business through employees attending external practitioners for treatment. This can represent a substantial hidden cost to a business.

Conclusion

The Occupational Health team and Standard Life have been impressed by the very professional osteopathic service provided. The initiative is one to be proud of, fitting comfortably within the domain of Occupational Health promotion in the workplace and in line with Standard Life's corporate philosophy – "Great place to work".

Osteopathy at BP Grangemouth

Brian Anderson, Occupational Physician, BP

Why osteopathy? Through our own sickness absence monitoring, we at BP Grangemouth have been aware for some time that in common with many other industries, musculo-skeletal disorders are usually the main cause of time lost from normal work, either through absence or necessary modifications to an employee's workload. We are also aware of research suggesting that early intervention of osteopathy or physiotherapy can be helpful, particularly where back pain is concerned.

When did we introduce this provision? We therefore decided, about three years ago, that it could be beneficial both to employees and the business to offer access to both osteopathy and physiotherapy, ensuring wider choice for the staff.

How is it implemented? BP contracted Active X Osteopaths to provide the service. We have an osteopath on site on Friday mornings, and employees contact Active X Osteopaths directly to set up an appointment. This can be done after an OH consultation, but this is not a requirement to access the service.



Payment It is BP policy to subsidise the osteopathic service for employees. Around half the cost is deducted from the employee's salary, the rest is paid by BP. On-site contracted staff can also access the service but pay the full cost themselves.

Advantages / disadvantages

We consider these advantages to be:

- Rapid access to a musculo-skeletal assessment and treatment.
- On-site service.
- Assisting the company to keep employees at work,
- Encourages active participation by individuals in the management of their problem.
- Access for contractors.

I can think of no serious disadvantages. If staff feel they need to be seen before the next site visit, they are permitted to attend the clinic in Edinburgh with the same payment arrangements.

Data/statistics Data for 2003 has not yet been collated, but in the course of 2002, over 100 new cases were seen by the osteopathic service, and a steady 10–12 treatments carried out each week.