DOCTORS FACE SURGE OF WORKPLACE HEALTH PROBLEMS

Thursday 3 September, 2020

Doctors are becoming increasingly concerned about a cascade of work-related health problems during the fallout from COVID-19, with some predicting dire consequences for employers and the economy.

Whilst many have become used to working at home or have returned to work with social distancing in place, many employers are not aware that the responsibility for managing health issues amongst their employee's rests firmly on their shoulders.

"As a country, we just don't have the resources to face the coming crisis in occupational health" says Dr. Amun Kalia MRCGP MbChB BSc. (Hons) ECPC DOccMed, an occupational health specialist practising in London.

"There are more occupational health jobs than trained doctors or nurses available to fill them and demand for the specialism is rocketing, which means employers will start to face delays accessing services" he said.

Specialists across the country have also expressed concerns about the long term impact of the lockdown on workers' health, especially their mental health. Geoff Heyes, Head of Health Policy and Influencing at the mental health charity Mind, has called for proactive detection of problems among Covid-19 survivors, but is concerned NHS mental health services may be already too overstretched.

"Going into this pandemic, only one in three people who needed help for their mental health were actually getting any. Coming out we are going to see even higher demand."

Drinkaware CEO Elaine Hindal has also issued a stark warning from the Alcohol Health Alliance. "What's worrying is concerning drinking patterns going unnoticed until it's too late. Employers must use every opportunity to plan for a return to work that prioritises employee health and wellbeing."

Dr. Kalia suggests that whilst waiting lists are common in the NHS, employers are about to find the same problem if they need professional advice about how to manage an employee's health problem.

With the Equality Act 2010 setting down in law that employers must adjust workers' roles before they can be dismissed on health grounds, demand for occupational health advice has been steadily increasing for years.

"We've seen huge increases in the numbers of enquiries in recent weeks" says Magnus Kauders, Managing Director of Occupational Health Assessment Ltd., an occupational health provider based in the South East.

"We usually have predictable seasonal peaks, yet we've seen a 100% increase in demand in the last two weeks alone" he said.

Employer's groups share the concerns. The Chartered Institute for Personnel and Development say "Employee health, safety and well-being is paramount. Employers need to be proactive in protecting their people and minimising the risk to staff."

The Society of Occupational Medicine has also called for swift action to provide universal access to occupational health across the UK, stressing that only half of the UK's population have access to workplace health support.

"We're used to employers suddenly finding they have a health issue to consider when they embark on a redundancy programme" said Mr. Kauders "although the numbers taking those steps now are pushing a wave of problems straight into occupational health to sort out" he continued "it's really difficult for everyone involved".

About Occupational Health Assessment Ltd

Occupational Health Assessment Ltd., is a specialist medical provider based near Guildford which supports businesses across the UK. With access to a team of expert doctors, the business helps

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