Worker "B" previously had to make contact with ten people, which is undesirable. Contact should be limited to two or less constant people. The eight other people must then report to the two selected people, who then report to Worker "B".

An example of modifying equipment/machinery can be illustrated with a reference once again to Worker "A". Instead of papers lying on either side of a typewriter, use of a dictaphone would require less body movement and the arms are then kept in the mid-position. Other examples are designing jigs for machinery or for work tasks to be carried out by one-handed workers; and advising employers about adaptation of a switchboard for a blind telephonist.

Obvious examples regarding the modification and removal of architectural barriers are the removal of steps and the building of ramps, or the adaptation of the swing door to a sliding door to accommodate a wheelchair-bound worker.

An example of an assistive device or aid, is a writing splint, which would be issued to a worker suffering from an injury to his dominant hand.

PLACEMENT OF DISABLED WORKERS

Before final placement, the occupational therapist must ensure that the worker is fully independent in using public transport, in handling money and in personal care. He must also be fully informed about what will be expected from him in the work situation, and be capable of complying with work norms. Placements are done through close liaison with vocational officers of the Department of Manpower Utilization, or through personal contacts. Follow up is essential to ensure that the disabled worker has settled into his work situation successfully.

CONCLUSION

The role of the occupational therapist in the work situation, in my opinion, has for some time now been very much with the disabled worker and not sufficiently with the worker who is at risk within the industrial setting. This state of affairs, I am sure, will gradually change as industry becomes more aware of its high financial losses due to the poor health of its workers, and the contribution occupational therapy can make.

References

powered by electricity. A list of the major problems of this group from assessment was as follows:

- Poor sitting posture (usual position stooped sitting).
- Height of chairs and tables inappropriate.
- Chairs provide little or no support for lumbar spine.
- Incorrect handling techniques (frequent flexion and rotation movements).
- Boredom.

Garment cleaners were found to have similar problems to the machinists, and when viewing their working situation this was not surprising, as all were found to be in much the same working posture as the machinists.

Packers and ironers were found to have one main complaint, viz. low back pain. On assessment their problems was summarised as:

- Standing most of the day.
- Incorrect handling techniques.

FURNITURE MANUFACTURERS (FACTORIES B AND C)

The other two factories co-operating in this study were furniture manufacturers and were found to have more or less the same complaints, except for one group of employees. There were three main occupations:

- Machine operators
- Hand sanders
- General labourers.

At these two factories the general atmosphere was not as pleasant as A. lighting was only fair, ventilation poor as the air was thick with sawdust. The staff/employee relationship was not as good as at A where all staff were known by name and appeared happy in their work. There was also found to be a more rapid turnover of staff at the pine factories.

The hand sanders at C were found to have the highest incidence of complaint, shoulder, hand and lower back pain being the most common. Their problems are summarised as follows:

- No working surfaces provided.
- Employees were using arm muscles instead of body weight to sand objects.
- No seating available.
- No knowledge of kinetic handling.
- Frequent flexion/rotation and extension/rotation movement.

In comparison, the hand sanders of B complained primarily of low back pain as did all general labourers and machinists of both factories. B also had a high incidence of headache and sore eyes. This factory had very long working hours and poor lighting in a small warehouse.

GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

- Employers should strive towards a better staff/employee relationship.
- Lighting should be adequate particularly in the warehouse of the pine factories.
- The length of the working week should not exceed forty-five hours and rest pauses are essential in every occupation. It has been found that increasing the working week seldom increases production.
- Pause gymnastics may be introduced to relieve monotony. Two five-minute sessions of exercise to taped music with instructions enable workers to change position and return to the job refreshed.
- Possible introduction of classes in larger companies, dealing with specific problems such as back injuries and cardio-vascular disorders.
- Introduction of background music for time periods throughout the day.

RECOMMENDATIONS ON POSTURE

- Staff should be advised on the use of cushions to support the lumbar spine.
- Where chairs are too high, the legs can be shortened to the correct height.
- All staff should be taught the basics of good standing and sitting posture.
- Instruction should be given on how to relax the muscles of the shoulders, neck, and upper back.
- Correct handling techniques should be taught to all staff.

In conclusion, physiotherapists are trained in the principles of anatomy, physiology and psychology. In addition the prevention of strain, stress, and overuse needs to be emphasized. A post-graduate course has been established at U.C.T. from 1983. Occupational physiotherapy will be the area of the future as populations and industries continue to grow.

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BOOK REVIEW

MALARIA
What you should know about it

Obtainable free from: Department of Health, Welfare & Pensions (Liaison Services), Private Bag X63, Pretoria 0001.

A booklet that gives brief and readable information about the history, geographical distribution, transmission and epidemiology, clinical picture, prevention and control of malaria. Suitable for lay readers.