

Updates from WorkSafeBC

The importance of relevant, accurate information

WorkSafeBC's new electronic claims management system will soon allow injured workers real-time access to the majority of records on their claim file. An injured worker's employer will have real-time access as well, but only to very limited information. However, if there is an appeal, the employer receives the same claim file as the worker.

The fact that the information will be more easily accessible online means that all of us who are providing information for a claim file must be even more diligent in ensuring both accuracy and relevance.

The extent of the information accessible to injured workers and their employers is not changing. The fact that the information will be more easily accessible online means that all of us who are providing information for a claim file must be even more diligent in ensuring both accuracy and relevance.

When providing medical information to WorkSafeBC, please ensure that only information relevant to your

patient's workplace injury or illness is included. During the claim process, different information may become relevant. For example, if a worker with an ankle sprain makes a typical recovery, only medical information related to the injured ankle would be relevant. However, if the injury becomes a prolonged disability, WorkSafeBC may need to know about prior problems with that ankle or any biopsychosocial factors involved.

Accuracy is another important issue. Please ensure that records sent to WorkSafeBC contain the name of only the injured worker who is your patient. As well, please check that personal health numbers, social insurance numbers, and all other personal information are correct and accurate.

For most physicians, the BC Personal Information Protection Act governs the collection, protection, retention, and disclosure of personal information. The BC Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act governs public organizations such as WorkSafeBC, the College of Physicians and Surgeons, hospitals, and other agencies, commissions, and boards. Under these acts, we are mandated to protect the personal information of injured workers.

The role of WorkSafeBC staff is to ensure that information placed on your patient's claim file is both relevant and accurate.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding the information you are disclosing to WorkSafeBC, please contact our Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Office at 604 279-8171.

New regulation regarding medical sharps

Effective 1 October 2008 any medical sharp—including sutures, scalpels,

and lancets—used to treat or care for a person must be a safety-engineered medical sharp. By now, you will have received notification of this new WorkSafeBC Occupational Health and Safety Regulation (OHSR) requirement.

All medical practitioners in all workplaces in BC—including medical offices, clinics, hospitals, and long-term care facilities—who use medical sharps are affected by this new regulation. The change, along with the 1 January 2008 OHSR change requiring the use of safety-engineered needles or needleless systems for medical procedures involving hollow-bore needles, were made to significantly reduce or eliminate the estimated 5000 needlestick injuries BC health care workers sustain each year.

The health, safety, and welfare of all workers are our primary concern. As medical practitioners, we have a significant role to play in reducing the risk of worker exposure to bloodborne pathogens. We expect and are counting on all medical practitioners to comply with the new regulations. There are no WorkSafeBC "sharps police" going door-to-door to enforce the changes, beyond the usual diligence of safety officers and hygiene officers.

For more information

For further information on the new regulations and guidelines associated with the changes, please visit our web site, WorkSafeBC.com or call the Prevention Information Line toll free in BC at 1 888 621-7233 to contact your local WorkSafeBC occupational hygiene officer.

—Peter Rothfels, MD
Director of Clinical Services and
Chief Medical Officer,
WorkSafeBC