

Family medicine resident rotations at WorkSafeBC

When a worker gets injured, their family doctor plays a key role in their recovery. Every year, WorkSafeBC offers a unique opportunity to 20 to 30 family medicine residents in their second year of residency at the University of British Columbia. The year-2 family medicine residents complete a 1- to 4-day rotation with WorkSafeBC that introduces them to the claims process and services, offers practical sessions with rehabilitation programs, and presents them with the basics of primary care occupational medicine. It is a just-in-time opportunity to reach family medicine residents before they graduate and start practising.

Work injuries and work illnesses are an important part of what physicians deal with in family practice. The focus of the WorkSafeBC rotation is on providing evidence-informed care for workers, demonstrating the importance of the relationship between work and health, and encouraging a safe and timely return to meaningful work when it is appropriate.

The family medicine occupational medicine rotation is supervised and taught by a group of physicians who are medical advisors at WorkSafeBC. These advisors review practical topics, such as approaching a patient with a work disability and how to effectively communicate using WorkSafeBC forms (Form 8 and Form 11).

Other staff at WorkSafeBC participate in the rotation, introducing the concepts of case management at WorkSafeBC. Residents meet case managers (claim owners) and vocational rehabilitation consultants, as well as physicians, at the Mental Health Claims Unit, Occupational Disease Services, and Health Care Programs. They are also introduced to WorkSafeBC occupational hygiene officers from Prevention Field

Services and learn about billing from Payment Services staff.

Accompanied during worksite visits by occupational hygiene officers and a specialist with occupational disease expertise, the residents learn the role of WorkSafeBC's prevention arm in maintaining safety in the workplace. This firsthand experience allows for review and discussion of potential hazards or exposures experienced by workers in some occupations.

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Residents report that the opportunity to be immersed in an unfamiliar occupational setting provides a unique lens into the working lives of patients.

During their rotation, residents attend a WorkSafeBC-contracted rehabilitation program in the community and spend time with medical and surgical specialists at the Visiting Specialist Clinic, a specialist clinic located at WorkSafeBC's head office in Richmond. The specialists see patients by referral and maintain the usual specialist-patient relationship with the worker. WorkSafeBC is able to expedite appointments with these specialists on behalf of their community physician or nurse practitioner.

In addition to the resident rotations, WorkSafeBC also offers academic sessions to family medicine residency programs. WorkSafeBC medical advisors provide annual guest lectures in many UBC family medicine training sites across the province.

The rotation is a mutual learning experience. At WorkSafeBC, we are provided with a great opportunity to learn about the needs of community physicians. For residents, we aim to build relationships between community physicians and WorkSafeBC medical advisors to support collegial conversations and to facilitate unique services that aim for the best clinical and vocational outcomes for injured workers.

Connecting with family medicine residents is part of a larger constellation of outreach initiatives that allow WorkSafeBC to reach physicians throughout their careers. If you are involved with a family medicine program and are interested in rotations for your residents, or if you are interested in an academic session, please contact a member of the supervising committee for the family medicine rotation:

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This article is the opinion of WorkSafeBC and has not been peer reviewed by the BCMJ Editorial Board.