

BeS and CBD Worker Challenges



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GOAL: Turn Beryllium Sensitized (BeS) and Chronic Beryllium Diseased (CBD) worker challenges into opportunities.

Instructional Objective:

Upon completing this information based presentation, the student will be able to **IDENTIFY** and **DISCUSS** the following Beryllium (Be) affected worker topics:

- Peer Pressure
- Lack of Insurability
- Medical Issues
- Employability / Worker Compensation
- Life Options

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As presented. NOTE: Many discussed topics fall into multiple categories.

Peer Pressure:

Lack of understanding by co-workers.

Close Friends understand and work around issues.

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Co-workers:

- 1) Work limitations
- 2) Symptomatic lifestyle

Close Friends:

- 1) Enables the BeS and CBD co-worker to be fully functional.

DISCUSSION:

Every day the affected worker will be unable to physically keep up with his co-workers, spouse, friends, and other family members in a way that is difficult for most to notice. Others tend to think that the affected are just having a “bad day” or are just “out of shape”. The next day around different people, the affected will experience the same protracted recovery time, fatigue and inability with another group of people. Many times, the affected will give 100% and recover with an evening or night that takes them away from engagement or more of life so that they can be ready for the next day.

Lack of Insurability:

Life Insurance

Long Term Care

Life Insurance: Unable to buy additional coverage

Long Term Care: Unable to obtain from most providers (or at a premium rate from those that will) any type of insurance that considers a spouse in the policy format.

Medical Issues:



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If you have just recently been diagnosed as a BeS or CBD worker, signs like this are not passed by without consideration.

Questions come to mind about what really matters.

The next side will look into some practical medical issues.

Medical Issues:

Work Related

Non Work Related

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Work Related:

- 1) Many doctor appointments, taking medications, limited ability, breathing hard, day time sleepiness. NOTE: Represents simple impacts for those where BeS or CBD is not advanced.

Non Work Related:

- 1) Affected worker needs to determine if spouse of other family members could have secondary exposure due to contaminated clothing etc. Current compensation programs do not allow for spousal testing and therefore come at the expense of the family. A real need to know if your spouse is experiencing similar health conditions and a real liability for those who must allow medical decisions to be based primarily upon finances.
- 2) Routine exams that require anesthesia (i.e. colonoscopy) require an anesthesiologist to determine stability. This will limit options, availability, and risk as alternative medications are introduced.
- 3) Constant struggle with improper diagnosis of treatment from Doctors. It is impossible for all of ones health care to come from those familiar with Be. Hospital stays for the Be affected are especially challenging. Some parts of the country are definitely better than others.
- 4) Cannot continue as a blood donor. Why not? Your co-workers / family will want to know. Peer pressure can get involved during blood drives. Cannot remain an organ donor. Will be advised to take Donor Designation off drivers license.
- 5) Magnetic Resonance Testing (MRIs) will be questioned and denied at some facilities.

Employability / Worker Compensation:

Supervisor Discrimination

Employability

Loss of Pay

Time off

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Supervisor Discrimination:

Most consider the BeS or CBD employee as not as “useful” or as “a liability” from their co-workers even though the BeS or CBD employee have the same talents and abilities. Favoritism to the worker that can “do it all”. Travel becomes an issue – Management’s issue with planning work, makes it more difficult if 1 out of a crew of 2 or 3 needs to be off. Especially for jobs that needs to be completed quickly, or are experiencing tight budgets.

Employability:

EXTREME pressure for the BeS or CBD employee to keep the job that they have because NOBODY will hire if they know about the Be issues.

Loss of Pay:

Even with current or any position, having Be work restriction limits building, areas, shops, etc. where one can work. This generally shows up on current positions for the wage roll employee coupled with a loss of overtime opportunities.

Time Off:

Sick and personal time gets used up in the first few months of each year. Then the BeS or CBD worker must take vacation when sick so that pay losses can be minimized. In most cases, even Plant Injury (PI Time) does not cover the first few days of an extended time away from work due to an illness, even if it is a covered illness.

Life Options:

Reductions

or

Redirection ?

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- 1) Generally, many sought after life options, (i.e. travel, active lifestyles etc.) are reduced for the BeS and CBD diagnosed at a time when such could be pursued. Obtaining a special license that requires physical reliability. (i.e. pilot, volunteer work, relief organizations, new vocations)
- 2) Most redirections, contain less desirable scope and/or pay.
- 3) Travel becomes an issue. Medications, BiPAP, fatigue. Flying seems to be hard on the BeS and CBD affected and it takes a while to recover. **MOST OF THE TIME**, the BeS and CBD affected end up getting a cold or upper respiratory infection.

Conclusion:

Until now, a prudent approach to controlling the spread of Be related health problems have been the primary focus of most Be programs.

In the future, technical and non-technical workforce education programs will be improved and provided so that goals for workers, employers, and health care providers can be realized.

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Read the slide twice.. maybe three times...

We should be commended for tackling some important problems first. (Minimizing Be exposure and providing medical screening.)

Improved workforce education provides an excellent opportunity to:

- 1) Accurately communicate topics similar to the ones presented in this briefing.
- 2) Reduce anxiety
- 3) Improve life for the affected
- 4) Reduce Cost