

Information Item	Taking drugs is everybody's responsibility
Sponsor	CEO
Date	December 2019

Taking drugs is everybody's responsibility

*Occupational Health Nurse, Marietta Duffy-Burgess, highlights the pitfalls around prescribed and non-prescribed drugs in the workplace – and what one crane company is doing to manage the risk in this month's **The Technical Corner**.*

The crane industry is confronted with another form of risk which requires health professionals to assist PCBUs, with the growing reliance on medical therapy as the primary intervention for illness from GPs.

Additionally, employees who aren't taking or managing their diabetes with prescribed medication – or any medical condition that requires prescription drug management appropriately – can be just as dangerous in the workplace as someone who is using illicit drugs.

So says Occupational Health Advisor, Marietta Duffy-Burgess, who has been helping McLeod Cranes manage employees' health for the past 7 years.

She has a mixture of community, hospital and educational experience with 15 years in Intensive Care and Cardiac/Coronary Care Units; four years in Nursing Education; and 18 months in Hospital management (private surgical hospital).

Marietta's extensive 20 years' experience as a Private Practice Health Consultant and Occupational Health Nurse has been invaluable for Scott McLeod and his team.

With her services the company has implemented an open and honest policy surrounding prescribed and non-prescribed medication.

It's a simple process; if you're taking something – whether it's insulin, pain killers or anti-depressants – the employer is made aware.

Why?

Because medication is taken to address a health issue, it can also alter someone's behaviour and critical thinking, memory, reaction time and ability to comprehend - this for an industry prone to risks could become disastrous.

However, it often isn't made explicitly clear during a GP consultation that someone needing a prescription is also someone who operates heavy machinery, like a crane, which could lead to complications in the workplace while under the influence of said drugs.

So, the responsibility of mitigating any negative effects of taking those prescriptions falls to the employee, employer and the PCBU's.

"So, it all falls back on the employer to trust that whatever the medical condition their employee has, pain medication or diabetes etc, that they take some duty of care to manage it," Marietta says.

Besides those open conversations, she helps McLeod Cranes undertake pre-employment medicals, annual health checks, injury management and health & wellness consults.

"An employee has a right to turn up to a safe work environment and is responsible for undertaking the roles and duties that they have been employed to do.

"Employees need to declare the medication that they're taking, and an employer needs to ensure a system that enables safe work to be undertaken while taking prescribed drugs.

"So, everyone has a responsibility to be clear and transparent about their medical and health issues. Because not doing so has as much risk as operating a crane without the proper training and competencies.

"What I like about what McLeod Cranes are doing, is they aren't differentiating or discriminating between prescribed and non-prescribed medication regarding the impacts they could have in the workplace. Someone who is not managing their diabetes with prescribed medication is just as dangerous in the workplace as someone who is cut from meth.

"But we think because a doctor prescribed the medication, it's okay. But it actually may not be, and people have to remember that a safe and effective workplace revolves around transparency, trust and open communication."

Scott McLeod
CANZ Immediate Past President

Newsletter Disclaimer:

The information in any CANZ newsletter is for general use only. The information has been provided by CANZ and by third parties including CANZ members. While CANZ has reasonably endeavoured to provide accurate information, neither CANZ nor the third parties provide any guarantees regarding the correctness, currency, completeness or suitability of the information for any particular purpose. It should not be relied on in place of appropriate specific advice or verification. Opinions provided by third parties on any matter do not necessarily represent the opinion or policy of CANZ.

The newsletter also contains promotional information about third parties and their products and services, including references to CANZ sponsors, and links to third party websites. CANZ does not endorse third party products or services, and any dealings with third parties, including accessing their websites, will be at the user's sole risk.