

Occupational Health Group is a service offered to the business community of North Alabama by Huntsville Hospital and Decatur General Hospital Systems



Why You Need Occupational Medicine Physicians

by James F. Gauthier M.D., M.P.H., Occupational Health Group

Before I went to medical school, I can remember clipping a quote out of the newspaper. It read “The doctor’s goal should be to cure sometimes, to relieve often, to comfort always” This quote crystallized for me what it was to be the consummate Family Physician.

I spent the first four years of my professional career as a board certified Family Physician in private practice in a small town where there were no occupational medicine clinics. Local industry leaders were quite eager to develop a relationship with any physician interested in taking care of their injured employees and consulting them with concerns of the work place.

As a result of this experience, I developed a keen interest in Occupational Medicine. I would talk to Health and Safety Directors, HR Directors and Plant Managers. I would go on plant tours and I learned about the myriad of concerns these employers had. Ultimately I pursued a Masters in Public Health (MPH) in Occupational Medicine and became board certified in Preventive/Occupational Medicine.

In contrast with your personal family physician and internist, Occupational Medicine Physicians are uniquely qualified to assist employers with the many workplace concerns that exist. For example, there are many regulations that govern the workplace including work comp, OSHA, DOT, ADA, FMLA to name a few. Few primary care physicians are as familiar with these regulations as the Occupational Medicine physician.

Compliance with the OSHA recordkeeping is a huge concern for most of our clients. Many of our primary care colleagues are not aware of what constitutes an OSHA recordable injury. In its simplest terms, any medical treatment beyond first aid makes an injury recordable. By the use of over-the-counter medications rather than prescription drugs or the use of Steri-Strips in lieu of sutures, physicians can assist employers avoid the entry of an injury onto the OSHA 300 log without sacrificing quality of care. Employers are also desirous of keeping lost work days and days restricted duty to a minimum. The medical literature in fact supports the concept that the expedient return of an injured employee to work and their regular duties reduces disability. Stated another way, an excessive number of ‘days off’ or prolonged ‘light duty’ can promote disability.

Another problem we frequently encounter is the issuance of medical certificates to unqualified CDL holders. Many physicians are not familiar with the DOT regulations that specifically list the physical requirements of medical certification. Consequently, drivers with conditions such as insulin-dependent diabetes, uncontrolled hypertension and seizure disorders, though controlled with medications, are issued medical certificates inappropriately.

Occupational Medicine physicians can also assist employers with ADA issues such as the determination of whether, during the pre-placement process, an applicant’s medical condition creates a substantial threat to oneself or others and therefore an offer of employment can appropriately be withdrawn. Perhaps there is a FMLA question regarding whether an employee’s time requested off is warranted for a given medical condition. Or, perhaps as an HR director, you have a ‘fitness for duty’ question regarding whether an individual with a seizure disorder can safely operate an overhead crane. Perhaps you have an employee who is ‘returning to work’ after an extended illness such as coronary artery bypass grafting (CABG) and you, as the Health and Safety Director, are concerned about the individual’s safety with summer approaching.

Often times as an employer, it is difficult to get an employee’s physician to come to the phone to discuss a work related issue. Even if the physician is willing to come to the phone, they may state that they are unable to discuss your employee’s on-the-job injury citing confidentiality issues. Many physicians do not realize that employers are entitled to this information under the workers’ compensation statutes. Further, workers comp cases are not covered by HIPPA. No one would dispute that primary care physicians take an interest in their patients.

Board Certified Occupational Medicine Physicians In Alabama

Physician	Location
Bradley James Dennis	Birmingham
James Lance	Birmingham
Michael Mueller	Birmingham
Michael Vaughn	Birmingham
Melanie Weaver	Birmingham
Timothy Key	Birmingham
Matthew Reardon	Birmingham
William McDowell	Burkville
Richard Gilbert	Cullman
R. Michael Lowery	Decatur
Freddy McMurry	Decatur
Cheryl Szabo	Fairfield
Eric Olins	Fort Rucker
Juan Santiago-Marini	Fort Rucker
Richard Lee	Gadsden
Robert Lang	Gulf Shores
Joseph Rea	Huntsville
James Gauthier	Huntsville
Carol Watts	Not Practicing
Robert Ross	Mobile
John Hamilton	Mobile
Terry Taylor	Mobile
Karen Huepel	Montgomery
Richard Doering	Montgomery
Shannon Smith	In Georgia
M. Wayne Bosserman	Owens Crossroads
James Eaton	Tuscaloosa
Peter Casten	Tuscaloosa
John Wheat	Tuscaloosa

Why You Need Occupational Medicine Physicians Con’t

Occupational Medicine physicians take an interest in their patients and their patient’s occupations and workplaces. Over the past 13 years, I have often reflected on the changes in my professional life since becoming an Occupational Medicine physician. One thing that has not changed, however, is that I find that one of my favorite quotes continues to be just as relevant and inspiring to me as it was when I was an aspiring medical student.

¹Preventing Needless Work Disability by Helping People Stay Employed, American College of Occupational and Environment and Medicine (<http://www.acoem.org/guidelines.aspx?id=566>)



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OHG Nurse Gives Presentation to Students at Virginia College

Jan Burton, Certified Occupational Health Nurse with Occupational Health Group, recently delivered a presentation for students of the Medical Assistant Program of Virginia College in Huntsville. The presentation, "Substance Abuse Training for Supervisors", is a drug and alcohol awareness training program for those individuals closest to the workforce...the supervisors.

A required educational component of the Alabama Drug Free Workplace Program, the presentation outlines the role of the supervisor in:

- Developing a basic knowledge of the effects of commonly abused drugs.
- Understanding the 4 key indicators of drug abuse.
- Learning how to intervene in problem situations.
- Understanding how to protect employee's confidentiality.
- Learning how to avoid enabling and common supervisor traps.

OHG would like to thank Virginia College's Medical Assistant Program for asking us to present the topic.

If you would like to have OHG present to one of your association or employer meetings, please contact OHG's Marketing Department at (256) 922-6677 for Huntsville and Madison, and (256) 353-4325 for Decatur.

Employee Spotlight: David Reasonover, CRNP



David Reasonover is a certified Nurse Practitioner, CRNP, who works in support of the physicians in all of OHG's clinic locations. He is also a member of the Navy Reserves where he serves in the Nurse Corps. Prior to being involved in healthcare, David received a Bachelor of Science in Education, with a major in mathematics, from Athens State College in 1988.

David received his Bachelors in Nursing from the University of Alabama in Huntsville in 1994. He received his Masters in Nursing from the University of Alabama in Huntsville in 2001 and completed his board certification as a Family Nurse Practitioner in 2002. He currently holds a certification as an Occupational Health Nurse (COHN-S).

His health care experience started in the emergency department as a registered nurse. He then went to work for Solutia in 1998, where he received his certification as an Occupational Health Nurse. David's experience as a Nurse Practitioner began in 2004 in the field of Nephrology before he joined Occupational Health Group in April of 2006.

OHG Directory

- Administration.....(256) 922-6675
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- OHG - Huntsville.....(256) 265-7000
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www.OHGonline.org

On-Site Wellness Services

What better place? Americans spend more time at work than any other activity except sleeping. That's why the workplace is the logical place to reach people; it is convenient, provides a solid support group, and everyone, employer and employee alike, reaps the benefits.

On Site Screenings Available:

• Cholesterol	• Body Fat Analysis
• Lipid Profile	• Colorectal Screening
• Blood Chemistry	• Vision Screening
• CBC with Differential	• Audiometric Testing
• Blood Pressure	• Respiratory Fit Testing
• Cardiac Risk Screening	• Pulmonary Function Testing
• Urinalysis	• Height & Weight
• PSA (Prostate Specific Antigen)	• Flu, Tetanus, and Hepatitis B Vaccinations

Having an upcoming Health, Safety, or Fitness month? Need a lunch and learn presentation for your employees? Consider one of our educational and Wellness Program Presentations.

Educational & Wellness Programs Available:

• Heart Health	• Stress Management
• Cancer Prevention	• Seat Belt Safety
• Fitness & Exercise	• Personal Wellness Profile
• Nutrition	• Diabetes Information

Why Choose OHG Wellness Services:

• Cost Effective Prevention Programs	• Staff Members are Available to Accommodate Your Company's Hours
• Experienced Health Care Professionals	• Confidential Services
• Programs are Customized to Meet Your Unique Needs	• Improves Employee Health Status and Morale

To find out more about Wellness Services please contact Jessica Setzer, Wellness Services Coordinator, at (256) 922-6699, or e-mail her at jessi077@hgala.org.

Flu News

**Summer is Here...
but Flu Season is just around the corner.**

Watch for upcoming information about scheduling your flu shots for the 2007-2008 season.

Holiday Closings

All OHG clinics will be closed in observance of the following holidays:

- Independence Day** July 4th
- Labor Day** September 3rd
- Thanksgiving** November 22nd & 23rd
- Christmas Day** December 24th & 25th



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