Tackling Musculoskeletal Problems: A Guide for Clinic and Workplace—Identifying Obstacles Using the Psychosocial Flags Framework


The scientific background for this booklet came from an international flags think tank convened in the UK. Between them the authors have expertise in psychology, musculoskeletal disorders and pain management. Dr Kendall was the main author of the original guide to assessing psychosocial yellow flags in low back pain published in 1997 when this concept first emerged and since when other colour flags have been introduced.

This guide is targeted not only at health care providers but is also for workplace and human resources managers, health and safety advisors and other interested parties including insurers and case managers. The subject matter of this publication is the use of the flags framework to guide the reader along the identification of psychosocial problems and to find a way forward to return employees to being active and working. The book is presented as flag shaped with attractive colours utilizing information boxes and descriptive case stories which also make it interesting to read.

The contents flow logically elucidating the flags model and its evaluation. Whilst the volume is thin it has a surplus of take home messages. There is little jargon and hardly any references, but a lot of practical advice with a problem-solving approach to achieving early recovery. I particularly liked the myths busting section that provides succinct statements such as ‘musculoskeletal pain is common across the whole population regardless of type of work’, ‘work or activity can trigger symptoms, but most work is unlikely to cause substantial damage’.

In summary, this publication is clear, concise and thorough. Its messages are far-reaching and awareness of this subject should be spread amongst all relevant
stakeholders. If the recommendations are implemented, there is potential for huge benefits to be reaped. It is a must for all trainee occupational physicians and I would highly recommend this to any practising occupational physicians.

Rating
★★★★★ (Essential for the bookshelf)

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