

## Functional Abilities & Limitations

### Putting Knowledge to Use

In October 2015, “**the Connection**” was focused on helping employers understand that it is critical to know each employee’s functional abilities and limitations and that there are key concepts to determining these abilities and limitations that are based upon science and research.

The concepts we discussed in October’s edition were:

- 1) Employee movement patterns
- 2) Physiological response to work load
- 3) Perceived effort level
- 4) Safe Maximum abilities
- 5) Comparing work process design to exercise

In this edition of “**the Connection**,” we will discuss how to put these key concepts into effective and efficient real world

### What are your 2016 Resolutions?

If you are in a human resources or safety position, or in any way responsible for the health and safety of your work force, HCE offers the following Resolutions for your consideration:

- I will not hire an employee that can not safely perform the essential tasks of the job!
- I will not hire an employee with an impairment, if the impairment creates a safety hazard for them or a fellow employee.
- I will not allow current employees to perform work tasks that are of an immediate or cumulative risk to their safety or health!



applications that will serve to lower your claims costs, improve employee safety and reduce employee turn-over.

- I will learn what I need to know in order to keep our employees safe and healthy!

Each of these suggested 2016 Resolutions would serve to keep your employees safe & healthy, while lowering claims and employee turnover costs. HCE offers a comprehensive functional testing and ergonomics program that is designed to help you accomplish ALL of these suggested resolutions.

The balance of this HCE NL will describe specific HCE products or services that can accomplish these resolutions and in our Employer Based NL next quarter, we will summarize several 2001 US Supreme Court cases that address these very issues.

# Functional Testing Overview

Each of the 2016 Resolutions that we suggested on the preceding page can be addressed by on or more of the functional testing programs offered by HCE. Our functional testing programs are organized into **two main categories**, tests **used in the hiring process** and tests **used with existing employees**.

All of the HCE functional tests are based upon the **essential work tasks** of each job being tested, which can be deter-

mined during a **physical demand validation** of each job.

Each of the functional tests will include a medical history, clinical exam and specific functional tests.

It is the level of detail of each of these testing components and how the specific program is administered that serves to make the distinction between the various types of functional tests offered by HCE.

Typically, employers will implement the specific test that addresses their most pressing issue, and add the other testing programs as successes are demonstrated and confidence in the programs grows.

## Functional Testing for New Hires

In the early 1990, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) was passed in an effort to protect disabled Americans from discrimination in the hiring process. This sweeping legislation forced many employers to curtail the medical physicals they were doing during the hiring process. No longer were you allowed to do a simple physical exam or x-ray and preclude someone from the workforce, especially if they were “disabled.”

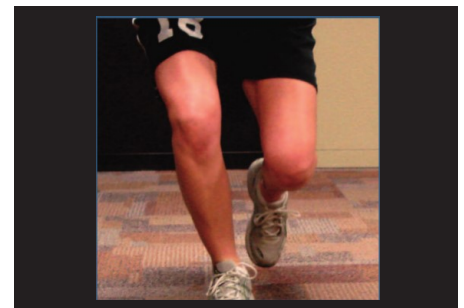
Until several Supreme Court cases decided in 2001 (summarized next quarter in “*the Connection*”), many employers just stopped doing screenings altogether. The problem with this “head in the sand” approach is that employers were hiring employees that could not safely perform their job or had pre-existing impairments that put them or their fellow employees at risk of injury.

The ADA does allow for two types of screens in the hiring of new employees: **physical agility testing** and **comprehensive pre-placement, post-offer screens**. Both of these exams must be based upon the essential job tasks of the position being hired for.

You do NOT have to test ALL new hires, but you do need to test everyone applying for the specific positions that you have decided to test for. Typically, employers begin by testing new hires that have applied for positions that tend to be the most physically demanding or where past injury data may indicate higher risk of injury.

I encourage you to keep an eye on your inbox next quarter for the summary of the Supreme Court decisions. I think you may be surprised what the court decided on a few key issues: who is “disabled,” can they employer NOT hire someone when they have a “pre-existing” impairment, and more?

If you can't wait, shoot me a quick email ([davidh@health-connections.us](mailto:davidh@health-connections.us)) and I will send you the summary in advance.



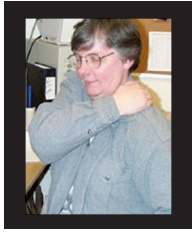
## What's the Difference?

### Physical Agility Tests

- Short VERBAL history of current or past medical issues (includes HR/BP for safety)
- Extremely brief / scanning type of physical exam
- Functional testing ONLY up to the job requirements
- Best used when the employer is hiring for short term jobs or contracts, and is just trying to prevent obvious problems from being hired

### Comprehensive Pre-Placement, Post-Offer Tests

- Comprehensive written and Verbal history (includes HR/BP for safety)
- Comprehensive musculoskeletal exam from head to toe, with clinical “special tests” and specific stress testing of key areas (neck, low back, shoulders, knees, etc.)
- Functional testing to individuals “safe maximum” limits, which are then compared to job requirements
- Tracking of “marginally” safe passes, protocol is NOT to hire people with increased risk to self or others
- Best used to control both WC & General Health musculoskeletal claims, incorporating into prevention and wellness programs (long term employees)



## Tip for a healthier workplace

We must recognize that the way in which we set up a work task MUST take into consideration the physical demands that will be placed upon the human body. **WORK is exercise!**

Too little stress from work or home and we get weaker!  
Too much stress from work or home and we have tissue breakdown and pain. **We need to learn to balance the amount of physical stress with adequate rest/recovery time!**

## Fit for Duty / Life Program

The Fit for Duty / Life Program from HCE is typically offered on a **voluntary** basis to employees. It is **confidential** in most cases and the exceptions to confidentiality are explained in the written and verbal consent process. The only times that “confidentiality” will be broken and information given to the employer would be in the case of an obvious safety issue to the employee or fellow employee, or if the employee is currently claiming (or in the future claims) a work related injury.

The Fit for Duty / Life exam includes all the aspects of the comprehensive pre-placement, post-offer exam for the person’s given work assignment, PLUS several standard fitness tests. All this data is summarized in a personal “Report Card” and then reviewed with the employee. After the report card review, the employee is instructed in specific exercises and/or activities that can help them overcome any identified problem areas, as well as, improve their safety of the job or at home. The test can be repeated to document progress and modify the interventions.

## Return to Work Process

The HCE RTW process is typically used when specific “triggers” are hit. Typical “triggers” might include a specific length of time away from work for a clinical reason or any restrictions to a full and complete return to work.

The RTW testing process is used by most HCE clients to address both work related and NON-work related issues. The goal of the HCE RTW Process is to ensure a safe and objective return to work.

To set up the HCE RTW process, each job that will be included in this program would be measured as to its specific physical demands (sitting/standing, lifting, carrying, etc.). After all this data is documented, HCE will develop a Company specific RTW Grid and functional testing process. Based upon a progressively increasing level of physical demands, HCE will break the entire list of jobs into various RTW Levels.

When a “trigger” is met by an employee, they are sent to a local physical therapy clinic that has been trained by HCE for the RTW test. When the results are available, same or next day, HCE and the local HR department will evaluate them together to determine if the employee can safely return to work.

HCE is able to contact and discuss the test results with the clinic and or treating physician as needed.

## HCE Educational Programs

### It's not all about "Ergonomics"



When I talk to employers about what subjects they might want us to teach on, the subject of ERGONOMICS is typically top on the list. While we do support the concept that ergonomics is very important to controlling your costs, it is NOT the only valuable topic that we could talk on.

As you know if you have been reading *the Connection* over

the last year, HCE takes a different approach to the musculoskeletal system. One HUGE part of our approach is that your employees, given the correct information about how their body works, can manage their own musculoskeletal health. They can learn how to stay in great musculoskeletal health and avoid problems at work and at home.

If they do develop a musculoskeletal, they can learn how to manage it without the need for extreme medications, severe functional restrictions or surgery. Information is power. Let us share this power with your employees! It will improve their lives and help control your costs. To find out more about our educational programs, please feel free to contact us at the phone or email listed below.