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is Chairman, Department of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation at Sinai Hospital of Baltimore. He is board certified in Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation, Pain Medicine, and as an independent Medical Examiner. As a board member of the Maryland Workers Compensation Educational Association (MWCEA), Dr. Brown is program chair for the 2007 annual MWCEA conference and will assume the presidency of that organization in 2009. Dr. Brown is a contributor to the American Medical Association's *Guides To The Evaluation of Permanent Impairment*, 5th and 6th editions. A special interest has been performing arts medicine, treating the medical problems of musicians and dancers. In an attempt to prevent such injuries in younger musicians, Dr. Brown teaches a class at the Peabody Conservatory entitled "Anatomy and Injury Prevention."

Medical Issues for Injured Older Workers and Their Employers

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Q: What types of workplace injuries are you seeing with older workers?

In my practice, particularly with older patients, I see and care for primarily back and spine injuries. Many times back injuries are caused by unexpected events such as slips while carrying heavy objects or a patient who might be combative while being lifted. I also treat older patients with knee injuries resulting from falls and rotator cuff injuries resulting from mishaps during overhead movements.

Q: What types of occupations are represented with the older workers you treat?

In general the occupations of my patients are more physically demanding and require manual labor. Some examples are construction, nursing and other health care jobs.

Q. Do you see injuries to older workers that could have been prevented or minimized by addressing safety or job accommodations up front?

As workers get older, they need to know what is happening with their bodies. They need to know about and treat underlying medical issues such as diabetes, high blood pressure, obesity and arthritis. Knowing and treating many of these medical conditions can help improve the overall health of older workers. Staying in good physical shape is important for everyone, but it is especially important for older workers who may be still climbing ladders and lifting patients. I think one of the most important factors is avoiding unpredictable physical activities.

Q. Are there any major contrasts in the types of injuries you see between younger and older workers?

With injuries to older workers who have physical jobs, there is always a good chance

the older worker has an underlying medical issue such as arthritis. As mentioned earlier, these underlying medical issues can make treatment longer and recovery problematic. A younger injured worker's overall physical shape allows him or her to recover much faster than an older worker with the same type of injury. And younger workers usually don't have the other medical conditions.

Q. Regarding recovery and rehabilitation, are there special concerns for older, injured workers?

Remember that the older body takes additional time to heal. Both the injured worker and the employer need to realize that fact. Additionally, proper therapy and treatment can help lessen the chance of aggravating an underlying medical condition. Underlying medical problems like heart disease might limit interventions such as physical therapy or work hardening.

Q. In your experience, what can employers and their employees do to help prevent older worker injuries and minimize their severity?

Be proactive with workplace safety. Proper safety procedures for whatever the job is should be followed and reinforced. It is also advisable to accommodate older workers' physical job limitations long before an injury occurs. Look at how you can modify or change a physical task to reduce strain on the body. Employers should consider transitioning older workers from physically demanding jobs to less physical jobs. Another theory is that with some older workers who are still doing physical work, they may be in overall better shape than say a younger counterpart. If they have taken care of themselves continuously throughout their working lives, they are in essence the survivors, the work-hardened veterans.