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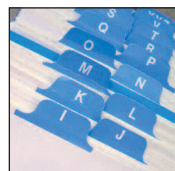
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**Cover Story:** Occupational Health at CarePlex in Pottstown provides a wide range of health-related services to local businesses, including work-related injury care and rehabilitation as well as pre-placement screenings, functional capacity testing, and screenings to meet OSHA and client-directed thresholds.



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# PMMC's Occupational Health



Occupational Health at CarePlex, located at 81 Robinson Street in Pottstown.

## Partnering with Local Businesses to Meet Worker Health and Safety Needs



(L to R) Debbie Melnyk, Director of Human Resources at Superior Tube; Kathleen Kelly O'Hara, Client Services Coordinator at Occupational Health; Peter Cunniss Registered Nurse, Occupational Health.

**W**hen Superior Tube Company was acquired by Berwyn-based global giant Ametek in May 2015, it was a watershed moment for the hi-tech Collegeville manufacturer — a validation of sorts of the company's tremendous success in a transformation process they began in 2005. Utilizing innovative concepts like "lean manufacturing" and *Kaizen*, a Japanese word meaning continuous improvement, as well as completely restructuring the relationship between management and union employees, opening the doors to collaboration and partnership through frequent communication, the company turned a corner, ending a difficult period. Today, Superior Tube is once again a thriving enterprise, providing high precision tubing solutions for the aerospace, energy (nuclear, oil and gas), and medical industries. Their flagship clients are the U.S. Navy and Air Force.

Success in business requires not only building successful relationships internally, but with service providers as well. Prior to the 2005 turnaround effort, Superior Tube had already enjoyed a successful 10-year relationship with Occupational Health at CarePlex as their provider of choice for a wide range of occupational health services. That relationship continues today, stronger than ever.

Occupational Health at CarePlex, located at 81 Robinson Street in Pottstown, provides a wide range of health-related services to Superior Tube, both on-site and at their modern CarePlex facility. The medical professionals at Occupational Health specialize in treating non-life threatening injuries. Pottstown Memorial Medical Center's Emergency Department is available for life-threatening conditions, or when CarePlex is not open. That works out great for a company like Superior Tube, which runs a three-shift around-the-clock operation. All employees treated in the Emergency Department can receive follow-up care at CarePlex.

"When CarePlex is not open, the fact that we are a department of Pottstown Memorial Medical Center with an ER Department enables us to offer 24-hour injury care capability to the companies that have multiple shifts," explains Kathleen Kelly O'Hara, Client Services Coordinator at Occupational Health. "That employee knows they can go to our emergency department if we're not open, and then follow up at CarePlex as needed for their injury care. That is unique to be able to offer that continuity of care."

In addition to work-related injury care and rehabilitation, Occupational Health administers a wide range of physical exams for the employees of Superior Tube, including pre-placement screening, functional capacity testing for specific jobs, and screenings to meet OSHA and client-directed thresholds. They perform a complete range of diagnostic testing and screening procedures, including: vision; audiometry, laboratory services; radiology services; drug and alcohol-free workplace services, electrocardiography, pulmonary function testing and respirator fit testing. They also offer inoculations and travel medicine services.



Superior Tube Company in Collegeville.



Gym at Occupational Health at CarePlex.

"All of our employees are very familiar with CarePlex," explains Debbie Melnyk, Director of Human Resources at Superior Tube. "They start their relationship with CarePlex when they undergo our new hire physical, so employees become familiar with the staff immediately. I know that our employees have a high level of confidence in going to CarePlex. They know they get excellent quality of care. They know the people are friendly and nice, and they are going to be treated well. It's very comfortable," Melnyk said, adding, "Thankfully we don't have very many injuries, but when they do happen, we tell them we're going to take them to CarePlex, and they know what that means in terms of who they are going to be working with, and the high quality of care they're going to get when they are there. It's great."

"We value the relationship that we've built over the years with Superior Tube," adds Kathleen O'Hara. "We're really proud of that. We want not only Debbie and her administrative team to feel confident about us. We also want the employees to feel like we're a partner in keeping them safe and taking good care of them," she said. "It seems that nearly all the services we currently offer to our clients, we provide to Superior Tube, either at CarePlex or on site. That makes them a great example of the type of comprehensive and long-term relationship we strive to build with all of the employers we work with, large and small. We want you always to feel like we're an extension of your team, and that we're all working for a safe workplace and the best care for the employees in that work place. In terms of quality of care, I'm just so proud of the medical providers that we have on our team. That makes my job easy, to know that we have such a strong and qualified Occupational Health staff," O'Hara said.

Peter Cunnius is a registered nurse with Occupational Health. He provides care at CarePlex, but also he specifically serves as Occupational Health's on-site nurse. He goes on site to employers to provide services, whether it is respirator medical clearances, or vision testing, hearing testing, or lab services.

"We like to educate employees while we go through the testing process," Cunnius explains. "For example we recently did respirator fit testing on site at Superior Tube. We do a pulmonary function test as part of the process, and to understand what they actually have to do and what that test is measuring, and how it relates to wearing a respirator, is an important piece of information for the employee to understand. Some employees are relatively new at wearing a respirator and being fit tested. I've had great experiences here (at Superior Tube) with the employees. They seem to be very receptive, and they do ask questions and they joke and have a good time. I think it's wonderful. Even with the hearing tests that I've done here. I often get feedback that they are happy that we came here, so they didn't have to travel," Cunnius explains.

"The on site services have been really nice," confirms Debbie Melnyk. "Especially lately. As Peter indicated, we put in a respirator program for our employees, and we had about 25 people who we needed to have fit tested for respirators, as well as medical exams to make sure that they were physically able to wear a respirator to do their job. So rather than have 25 people go off site individually and take the time away from their job and the production of tubes, which is what we do, they were able to come here we were able to get through that group of people really quickly and handle a large group of employees at one time."

"We have very strong requirements around certain positions," Melnyk said. "From an eye test perspective, where people have, depending on the job, specific requirements about how often they are required to have their vision and their hearing tested, from a safety perspective, so it's ongoing. We use a lot of services at CarePlex. I think we'd be hard pressed to find a week of time when we don't have some contact with Occupational Health for some reason."

(Continued on page 8)

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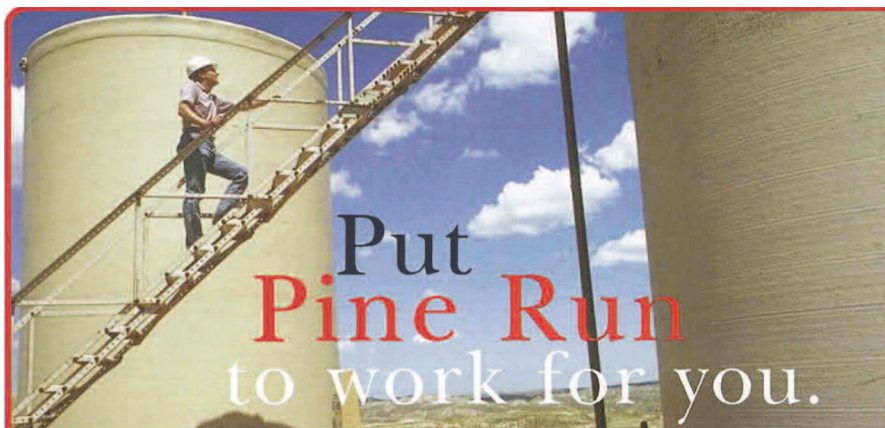


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**COVER STORY**

*(Continued from page 7)*

As companies make transitions with management and with ownership, the professionals at Occupational Health are able to help the company transition, equipped with the history of knowing what's required regarding physical exams, and what protocols have been in place. "Many times companies do find that helpful, as far as what do we have in place," said Kathleen O'Hara. "Do we need to tweak anything? Upgrade any protocol? We like the fact that we can offer that continuity of care as a company transitions."

"When I came to Superior Tube two and a half years ago, I was concerned about the relationships that had already existed, and Kathleen was one of the first people I talked to," said Debbie Melnyk. "It was really nice to know there was somebody I could depend on for everything when it came to the employees and their health care from a work perspective. It's been a great relationship over the past couple of years. I know I can pick up the phone and talk to her about anything, and get answers to any questions I may have," she said. "That was a tremendous help to me when I came in here. We had a new HR team. We went to CarePlex. Kathleen took time with her team and with us to get us familiar with the facility. Occupational Health is definitely a great business partner."

The medical professionals at Occupational health also pride themselves on serving as a strong resource for information regarding regulatory requirements. "Companies have a need for information, whether it is OSHA or DOT, or Work Comp related," Kathleen O'Hara explains. "We have really gotten to know regulatory requirements. That's something we don't charge a consultation fee for. Per OSHA it's the employers responsibility to know all the regulations and bring those to us and tell us what we need to do, but we help them to understand the regulations and requirements. That's part of the relationship,"

she said, adding, "One of the things many companies value about us is how proactive we are in our return to work strategies when someone's been injured."

"We are definitely OSHA compliant," Debbie Melnyk said. "Occupational Health is our number one choice on our list of providers that we can use for this facility for Workers Comp."

"Many of the services requested are built on company policy as well," adds Kathleen O'Hara. "There are protocols for what corporations require for new hires, including what physicals are required. Many times the OSHA requirements enter in, whether it's related to hearing, or respiratory medical clearances to be able to wear a respirator, for example."

"And some of it is customer driven," said Debbie Melnyk, "because we have customers who require that we produce the highest quality products that we can, and part of that is that we have healthy employees who are able to do their jobs and catch things that maybe you wouldn't catch if you didn't have good eyesight. A lot of the certifications are driven by our customers."

Another important element that distinguishes the medical professionals at Occupational Health is they are very proactive with their Return to Work strategies for companies with injured workers.

"Our goal is to return that employee to work, to their full duty, as quickly as medically appropriate," explains Kathleen O'Hara. "And so we work with the employer, and the employer creates modified work opportunities for them while they are recuperating from their injury."

Occupational Health utilizes specialized equipment at CarePlex for work related injury rehabilitation, as well as functional capacity testing, called the Sapphire System. "We have several staff members who are certified screeners," O'Hara said.

*(Continued on page 10)*

*Eastwood*

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## COVER STORY

(Continued from page 8)

"We can take the physical demands of an employer's job, and from that create a customized physical capabilities test. The employee is put through the rigors of the position — pushing, pulling, lifting, carrying, and squatting — to see if they can actually accomplish the physical tasks. Employers find this very helpful because their goal is to hire someone who is physically capable of doing the job, safely. The benefit is really two-fold, for the employer and the employee. The employer will see fewer injuries in the workplace, and savings in terms of injury care and lost work days," O'Hara said.

It's very natural for any patient employee to be nervous when something is health related, according to O'Hara. "Whether they are coming into CarePlex for a routine drug test or physical, or they are coming for a respirator medical clearance, it's very normal for them to be apprehensive, because they want to pass to make sure that they can continue employment, and so our medical providers, I feel, are excellent, not only in their medical care, but also in their demeanor with their patients to put them at ease and encourage them and to educate them," she said.

A progressive company like Superior Tube recognizes the importance of paying attention to the slightest detail, and in addition to contributing to the collective health of employees, Occupational Health also contributes to the company's bottom line. "We've seen very positive effects," said Debbie Melnyk. "Occupational Health at CarePlex is part of that solution, along with our very active safety committee. We are always looking for ways to make it a safer workplace and keep our employees healthy. Our partnership with Occupational Health and communication with the employees are a large part of that. Over the past eighteen months, we've measured our safety incidences and how many injuries we have, and we are definitely on an upward trend for the best. Our insurance rates are better than they have ever been, and each month they get a little better, because we go another month without an injury. We've managed to keep our insurance rates at a pretty level rate over the past few years, which I don't think is happening in too many places anymore. Companies are definitely experiencing higher costs every year.

(Continued on page 12)

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## COVER STORY

*(Continued from page 10)*

Some of our employees have been here over 50 years, and they still come to work every day, so I think that's pretty much an indicator of how they try to keep themselves healthy."

Employers like Superior Tube often recommend Occupational Health at CarePlex to other companies. "Based on our reputation for quality medical care and customer service, we get referrals," Kathleen O'Hara said. "But also we promote safety in the workplace. PMMC is the largest employer in the Pottstown area, and we promote safe workplace practices for our own employees, and so we naturally want to promote it in the communities we serve as well. I can hear the voice of our medical director Dr. Burnett echoing through the hallways. When he says goodbye to a patient, he says 'Work safe!' That's how he leaves them. He wants them to think about working safe!"

The specialists at Occupational Health are experts at partnering with their clients to address every possible work-related health issue, including immediate, even urgent occupational health care needs, and cultivating the kinds of ongoing relationships that benefit companies in ways no other provider in the region can match. With the recent emergence of many new neighborhood immediate or urgent care facilities, employers are now faced with more options when searching for the right partner to manage their company's occupational health care and employee rehabilitation concerns. Pottstown Memorial Medical Center's Occupational Health at

CarePlex, has been successfully addressing employer health and wellness concerns throughout the region for over two decades, providing specialization in each of the myriad of health care issues any employer could possibly face, and offers all of the services that employers in many industries require.

We specialize in Occupational Medicine,"

Kathleen O'Hara said in conclusion. "That sets us apart from, for instance, an urgent care facility. I recently heard Dr. Burnett speaking to a patient on the way out, and the patient said, 'Thank you so much for explaining that to me the way you did. I really appreciate that.' That's what sets us apart. We're not just a walk-in clinic. We have a long-term relationship not only with the employer, but also the individual patients we're seeing. Our



Carl Burnett, D.O.,  
Medical Director,  
Occupational  
Health at  
CarePlex

providers take the time to explain things to them so that when they leave, whether they've had an injury or a physical, they understand what's taken place and what they need to do to get better."

Occupational Health at CarePlex is the ideal partner for businesses of all sizes, offering a complete array of comprehensive services including: Employment physicals; Workers injury care; Rehab Services (PT, OT and hand therapy); DOT medical certifications; Drug and alcohol testing; Diagnostic health screening; Inoculations; Wellness programs; Travel medical services; Ergonomic consultation and injury prevention training; Onsite services and education; and OSHA compliance support. ■

**For additional information about Occupational Health at CarePlex, please call 610.326.2300 and visit [www.pottstownmemorial.com](http://www.pottstownmemorial.com).**