

CASE STUDY

The Certificate of Capacity facilitates discussion between GPs and patients about using work as part of their recovery.

The Certificate of Capacity is now in use in GP practices in the ACT and surrounding region. The medical certificate focuses on the capacity of the patient, rather than incapacity.

The Certificate of Capacity promotes early intervention and a supported return to work, which can often lead to a faster recovery from injury and illness.

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One GP who has welcomed the introduction of the certificate is Dr Chris Ayres who practices from Tuggeranong Square Medical Practice in Canberra.

Dr Ayres says the new certificate means he no longer has to make a rudimentary yes or no decision about whether a patient is fit for work.

“This certificate creates an opportunity for me to have a discussion about what my patient could do at work rather than simply saying ‘yes you can work, or no, you can’t work’. I can show my patients that the certificate has a section here for me to say ‘let’s talk about what else you can do at work.’ ”

Dr Ayres says that patients often think that they can’t return to work until they’re 100 percent fit and recovered from their illness or injury.

“This is not the case,” Dr Ayres says. “The new form encourages me to have a proper think about the questions being asked. It entices the patient and the GP to make the link between work and recovery.”

Dr Ayres says patients are often unaware they may return to work and do other duties while recovering from illness or injury.

He says the certificate also encourages employers to think about how they can provide modified duties for an injured or ill employee.

“This new certificate allows me to say ‘let’s work with your employer to see how we can modify your duties so we can help you make a gradual return to work.’ ”

Dr Ayres says returning to work has helped his patients recover faster.

“People who include work in the recovery process seem to get better quickly, their pain seems to be less, whether it’s because they’re not dwelling on their injury as much, or they’ve got more social involvement or extra support from a social network. I think it is pretty well accepted that if you can do something at work you should, and you’ll get a better outcome,” Dr Ayres says.