



# Pre-placement examination: A strategy to ensure benefit to the employees and employers

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## ABSTRACT

Ergonomics is the “science of work” that encompasses different measures to ensure fitting the work place to the worker. Among all the strategies implemented to safeguard the interests of both workers and employers, pre-placement examination, has been acknowledged as the foundation element. A comprehensive pre-placement examination assists in careful selection of workers, developing systematic plans to help workers to get acclimatized to their job, minimizing health risks to the workers, improving the quality of life of workers, reducing the burden on the health care delivery system/insurance companies, maintaining good relations between employee and employer, building a healthy environment at work place, and eventually augments the outcome of the industry. The pre-placement examination for a given job position is difficult to standardize worldwide, and thus should be tailor-made based on the characteristics of the employee; the type of equipment/process utilized to perform a specific job; routine policy of the industry; and amount of workload. To conclude, pre-placement examination is an integral component of the ergonomics and thus there is an immense need to implement it effectively in all settings to ensure a benefit to both employees and employers, and eventually augment the productivity of the industry or economic growth of the nation.

**KEY WORDS:** Employees, employer, ergonomics, pre-placement examination

## INTRODUCTION

### Pre-placement Examination

Ergonomics is the “science of work” that encompasses different measures to ensure fitting the workplace to the worker [1]. Among all the strategies implemented to safeguard the interests of both workers and employers, pre-placement examination, has been acknowledged as the foundation element [1]. Pre-placement examination or screening is conducted at the time of employment and generally consists of worker’s medical, family, occupational and social history; a thorough physical examination and a range of laboratory/radiological examinations (such as chest X-ray, electro-cardiogram, vision testing, urine or blood examination, and genetic screening) based on the nature of the work [1,2]. In fact, it has been recommended to employ a combination of different tests to improve the predictive value of individual screening methods [1,2].

### Exploring the Utility of Pre-placement Examination

Pre-placement examination has been considered as an important practice and is extensively implemented in some of the countries to suit the workers to their workplaces [3,4]. A comprehensive pre-placement examination assists in categorizing employees into low risk (viz. who does not need further examination) and high risk (viz. who need further clinical investigation and management), and thus aids the employers in careful selection of workers; developing systematic plans to help workers to get acclimatized to their jobs; minimizing health risks to the workers; improving the quality of life of workers; reducing burden on the health care delivery system/insurance companies; maintaining good relations between employee and employer; building a healthy environment at work place; and eventually augments the outcome of the industry [1,5,6]. Furthermore, pre-placement screening has been also found to be of considerable advantage to predict sickness absenteeism, as it has become a serious public health concern over the last decade [1,7]. In fact, a systematically planned pre-placement

examination will also serve as a useful bench-mark for future comparison and thus can be an important source of health information to employers, policy makers and to the insurance companies [1].

### Identified Barricades Limiting Implementation of Pre-placement Examination

Despite the availability of confirmatory evidence regarding the utility of pre-placement screening, its universal implementation has remained questionable, especially in small scale industries [1-3]. A wide range of challenges such as test related parameters (viz. how to set up medical surveillance, which tests to use, test frequency and which outcome parameters should be used in different occupational groups) [8]; economic and manpower constraints (viz. recruitment of a doctor and additional staff, building liaisons with hospitals/laboratories, miscellaneous costs like obtaining reports from general practitioners, telephone calls, etc.) [9]; and quality of the pre-placement assessment [10]; have been identified in the global implementation of the pre-placement examination in different sectors. In short, its current use in different industries (including the health sector), has been reshaped by economic factors, litigation, legal measures, and recent development in the field of medicine [8,10].

### Recommended Strategies to Ensure Universal Employment of Pre-placement Examination

The pre-placement examination for a given job position is difficult to standardize worldwide, and thus should be tailor-made based on the characteristics of the employee (viz. education status; history of similar job in past, etc.); the type of equipment/process utilized to perform a specific job; routine policy of the industry; and amount of workload. However, in order to respond to the identified challenges, the policy makers should formulate a comprehensive strategy to assist the administrators of industry/healthcare establishments to streamline the entire process of pre-placement examination in heterogeneous settings [8]. Furthermore, mere formulation of a holistic policy will not serve the purpose, rather its implementation in the industry by advocating for the same and motivating the administrators are desired [9,10]. In addition, there is a definitive need

of regular monitoring/supervision, so that the quality and execution of pre-placement examination can be assured, and any faulty practices can be rectified [10].

### CONCLUSION

To conclude, pre-placement examination is an integral component of the ergonomics and thus there is an immense need to implement it effectively in all settings to ensure benefit to both employees and employers, and eventually augment the productivity of the industry or economic growth of the nation.

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