

Socso backs factory hand's return to work



BACK UP: Ramlah assisted by physiotherapist Zubaidah Yusop performing an exercise to strengthen her back.

KUALA LUMPUR: For many years, heavy lifting was "all in a day's work" for factory worker Ramlah Malim.

She had to move a lot of heavy boxes as a worker at an air conditioner assembly plant in Shah Alam.

After years of working, she was admitted to hospital with a swollen back in 2003 and had to take long leave from work.

Upon returning to work, Ramlah, 37, found herself taking medical leave, and returning to hospital to treat her back pain.

Her frequent absence from work due to her back problems got the attention of the Social Security Organisation (Socso), which put her on its Return To Work programme.

On May 16, she became the first worker to complete the three-month programme and is now back at the plant, with much of the pain relieved.

"I used to move a lot of heavy boxes, but my employer distributed the workload when I went back to work.

"Despite that, the work was still a huge strain because it involved a lot of bending down.

"Now, my employer has arranged a desk job for me," she said in a recent interview.

Throughout the programme, Ramlah underwent treatment at the DBC Spine and Rehabilitation Centre here, where trained physiotherapists guided her in doing specific exercises to strengthen her back.

"They also taught me how to do some exercises at home as well as the things that I can and cannot do, to avoid back pain.

Socso medical and rehabilitation manager Dr Mohammed Azman Aziz Mohammed said 10% of more than 56,000 claims in 2003 for temporary disablement, totalling RM62mil, were related to back problems.

Dr Mohammed Azman said the target groups for the programme are those on prolonged medical leave due to back pain and those who are claiming invalidity pensions because of it.