

at work

Information on workplace research from the **Institute for Work & Health**

This Issue

For Clinicians

Institute reviewing functional assessments;
New return-to-work training manual available

For Workplace

Work-Ready project produces seminar materials;
New world of work focus of new book

For Policy

CIAR names Institute scientist Liberty
Health Scholar

For Researchers

Institute research advisory group gives focus
to research program

This Issue's Supplement

The pervasive use of technology, new management and human resource practices, and the growth of knowledge-intensive and service industries, have had substantial effects on the nature of compensable injuries. A new book, *Injury and the New Work of Work*, edited by Terrence Sullivan, outlines some challenges and options facing workers' compensation. This issue of Infocus reviews the issues discussed in the book, and looks closely at the challenge of prevention.

To be notified by e-mail when a new issue of *At Work* is published and available on our web site, send your e-mail address to atwork@iwh.on.ca.



INSTITUTE
FOR WORK & HEALTH
INSTITUT DE RECHERCHE
SUR LE TRAVAIL ET
LA SANTÉ

Research Excellence
Advancing Employee Health

Institute Active at National Accident Prevention Conference

Nearly 4000 people attended the annual Industrial Accident Prevention Association (IAPA) conference in Toronto April 10 – 12, where the Institute was active in presentations and workshops.

The Institute produced a unique slideshow demonstrating a key health and safety message - reduce injuries and achieve a healthier workplace by improving both the physical and psychosocial work environment. A special newsletter on this topic was also available.

Staff from the Institute joined 21 other health and safety organizations, including, and coordinated by, the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board in the large Health & Safety Way 2000 area, providing information on individual organizations as well as a number of featured themes.

Institute staff were also involved in three workshops during the conference and trade show:

Lynda Robson, research associate at the Institute, gave a presentation on the Healthy Workplace Scorecard which profiled an Institute pilot study; Donald Cole, senior scientist, together with Robert Norman from

the University of Waterloo gave a workshop titled "You too can do research!".

The third workshop, given by Cole and research transfer associate Dee Kramer, was an interactive presentation on the biomechanical and psychosocial effects on injury in the workplace. ▲▲

To receive a copy of the special newsletter, contact **Laura Maniago** at (416) 927-2027 Ext. 2101, or by e-mail: lmaniago@iwh.on.ca.

NEW BOOK FOCUSES ON INJURIES AND MODERN WORK

Institute researchers and staff joined members of the media and invited guests for a reception to launch *Injury and the New World of Work*, a new book edited by Institute president Terrence Sullivan.

The book presents research that examines a broad range of research solutions and policy options for Canadians regarding the dramatic change in the nature of work and work injuries during the past 50 years.

The reception was held in downtown Toronto, at 401 Richmond Street West, site of the Macdonald Manufacturing Company in the first half of the 1900s. The building, built

in 1899 and now home to a variety of arts- and media-based companies, provided an appropriate setting in which to discuss the changing nature of work. ▲▲

For more information about the book, see the article in this month's issue of *Infocus* (16a) or visit our web site, www.iwh.on.ca.



The Institute for Work & Health is a knowledge-based change organization that strives to research and promote: new ways to prevent workplace disability, improved treatment, and optimal recovery and safe return-to-work.

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Some **Clinical** News



NEW GUIDE ON INJURY AND RETURN TO WORK PRODUCED FOR PHYSICIANS

A new guide has been developed to provide practical information to assist physicians and residents in managing their patients in the process leading to return to work and/or function, following an injury or illness. The guide, *Injury/Illness and Return to Work/Function: A Practical Guide for Physicians*, is a result of work by the Physician Education Project in Workplace Health (PEPWH).

Currently, little time or effort is devoted to the issue of disability and compensation in medical training, leaving many physicians poorly trained to effectively manage disability and return-to-work issues for their patients. Through a comprehensive focus group process, the PEPWH determined that physicians want more information on how to best manage the return-to-work process. The guide was produced by the PEPWH in response to this need.

The guide emphasizes an active role for physicians as advocates, communicators, resource managers and facilitators in the return-to-work process for their patients. It also provides useful information for physicians who handle injured or ill patients, particularly as a result of a workplace accident. The guide outlines the factors that influence return to work, including workplace conditions, access to services such as rehabilitation and retraining opportunities, and socioeconomic conditions.

Features that distinguish this guide from other return-to-work materials include information on income support from various public (provincial and federal) and private insurance plans available to those who are unable to work because of illness or injury. In addition, a Workplace Safety & Insurance Board of Ontario (WSIB) appendix includes forms that physicians may be required to complete, as well as how to contact WSIB staff.

The guide also includes a booklet from the Work-Ready project — a project co-sponsored by the Institute, HEALNet (Health Evidence Application and Linkage Network), and the National Institute of Disability Management and Research. This booklet provides summaries of the published literature on interventions to optimize recovery and return to work for soft-tissue injuries, and of interviews conducted with a variety of people directly involved in return to work.

“The findings from the focus groups conducted by the PEPWH several years ago, and physician

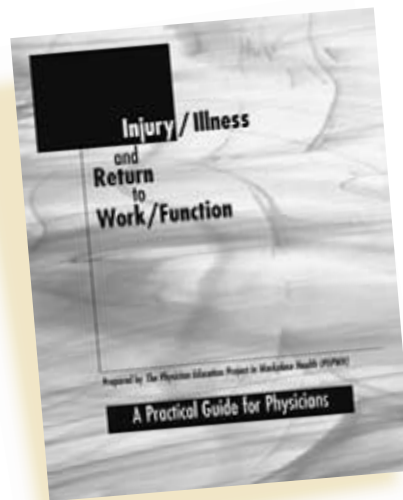
surveys carried out more recently by the WSIB, have convinced me that the guide represents a needed resource,” noted Gary Liss, MD, who has had responsibility for coordinating activities of the project.

To facilitate improved understanding and management of return to work/function for ill and injured patients by physicians, the guide will be disseminated this fall to Ontario's five medical schools, anticipating its incorporation into the curriculum for third or fourth year medical students in 2000–2001. Family practice, physical medicine and rehabilitation, and occupational medicine residents will also be

introduced to the guide.

PEPWH began as an initiative of the Institute for Work & Health and the Ontario Medical Association's Section on Occupational and Environmental Medicine. It receives funding from the WSIB and has representation from physicians and a range of stakeholders involved in return-to-work issues and processes. 🏡

If you are a physician currently in practice and would like to learn more about the contents of the guide, a complete copy of the document is posted on the WSIB's web site at www.wsib.on.ca. The Work-Ready project is discussed elsewhere in this issue of At Work.



INSTITUTE STUDIES FUNCTIONAL ASSESSMENT EFFECTIVENESS

Institute researchers are participating in a study about the effectiveness of current functional assessment (FA) practice. The first step in this research involves a study using workers with soft-tissue injuries undergoing the return-to-work process. Funded by the WSIB's Research Advisory Council, the project is led by Susan Strong [McMaster University]. The study will produce the first data-based information regarding the state of current practice and the sequence of events following a FA.

The researchers plan to follow a group of workers with soft-tissue injury for eight months after their FA. The study will develop and analyze profiles of assessment organizations through site visits, assessor interviews, and standardized questionnaires. Given the range of FA approaches, the study will examine whether there are differences in their ability to predict occupational performance and in their usefulness in vocational decision making. The study will also create a profile of current assessment practices.

Participating injured workers will be interviewed by telephone (two and eight months after FA) regarding their current activities, occupational status, health status, and their perception of the assessment's utility. At eight months, the report user(s) for each case will be interviewed about (*To be continued on page 3* ➔)

Some **Workplace** News



RETURN TO WORK MATERIALS AVAILABLE FOR WORKSHOPS

Current scientific knowledge and experience on the management of occupational soft-tissue disorders to facilitate prompt recovery and return to work is the focus of the Institute's Work-Ready project. Work-Ready brought together researchers in occupational health and rehabilitation from Ontario, Quebec, and Manitoba.

The results of their research were synthesized to develop a set of educational materials which could be used to facilitate Work-Ready workshops. These workshops were designed to offer an opportunity for workplace parties (labour and management), third-party payers, occupational health and disability management providers, and advocates for people with disabilities to collaborate on the best practices for the management of occupational soft-tissue disorders.

The *Participant's Booklet*, developed as background material for those attending the workshops, contains brief summaries of the published literature on interventions to optimize recovery and return to work, and of the interviews conducted with people directly involved in return to work.



Work-Ready Workshops are based on a series of *Case Studies*, illustrating a range of situations in which return to work is delayed. Each case study is accompanied by an analysis, recommendations

on what might have improved the final outcome, and a list of references. A *Facilitator's Manual*, based on the collective experience of a series of cross-Canada workshops forms the third part of the Work-Ready package.

The three-part package is available for \$15. The *Participant's Booklet* and the *Case Studies* are available as a unit for \$5.00. Taxes & delivery costs will be added where appropriate. 🏠

To receive an order form or for more information, contact Laura Maniago by e-mail, info@iwh.on.ca, or by phone, (416) 927-2027 Ext. 2101. Information on our publications is available on the web site, www.iwh.on.ca.

(← *Continued from page 2*)

their use of the report and their perception of its validity and utility. In the second year, focus groups with injured workers and report users will be conducted for further elaboration and verification of initial trends identified in the analysis.

At the 22 participating organizations, site visits, assessor interviews, and staff training in identification of potential study subjects have been completed. Participating sites are geographically situated in southern Ontario, from Oshawa to London. They are a mix of publicly funded, for-profit corporations, partnerships, provincial networks, and national organizations. Assessors are typically some combination of kinesiologist, physiotherapist, and occupational therapist with a minority of teams including physicians, chiropractors and occupational-health nurses. 🏠

For more information, contact Rhoda Reardon, Research Transfer Associate, by e-mail at rreardon@iwh.on.ca. Susan Strong may be contacted at McMaster University, (905) 521-9140 Ext. 27835.

Of Interest to **Policy Makers**

INSTITUTE SCIENTIST NAMED CIAR'S LIBERTY HEALTH SCHOLAR



John Lavis

John Lavis, a scientist at the Institute, has been chosen as the Liberty Health Scholar for The Canadian Institute for Advanced Research (CIAR). As a result of a three-year financial commitment from Liberty Health, Lavis, a physician studying the impact of work on health and the role of research in decision-making, will be able continue his work with CIAR's

Population Health Program.

"In the next century, employee health will be a key component of the human capital of a firm, contributing to a company's productivity and competitiveness", says Lavis.

The research being conducted by Lavis and his colleagues examines the relationship of work experience and the use of health-care benefit plans. He is also investigating the ways in which benefit plans can influence whether people return to work after an illness or injury and their experiences once they're back.

Lavis is also interested in determining how decision makers use research. In a recent study at the Institute, he looked at how employers, workers,

and journalists conceive of and use research about the links between health and the workplace. Investigating research transfer can have significant impact on getting relevant information into the hands of decision makers and in facilitating the uptake of new ideas.

A recent issue of *Infocus* (14a) profiled some of the work Lavis is conducting with population health indicators.

Liberty Health is a one of Canada's largest health benefit management companies. 🏠

For more info on Lavis' work with the Institute, contact Laura Maniago by e-mail, info@iwh.on.ca, or by phone, (416) 927-2027 Ext. 2101. John Lavis may be contacted by e-mail, jlavis@iwh.on.ca.



Important **Research** News

RAC MEETING BRINGS INTERNATIONAL RESEARCHERS TOGETHER

Leading researchers from a number of countries came to the Institute in April for the annual meeting of the Research Advisory Committee (RAC). The annual meeting is an important part of the Institute's

commitment to delivering relevant, excellent research.

The committee discussed the changes in work and workplace health during the last decade. Rick Deyo, a committee member from the University of Washington Medical Center, gave a presentation on the intimidation researchers sometimes face from special interest groups. This was the topic of a previously published article in the *New England*

Journal of Medicine (NEJM 1997; 336: 1176-1180).

The Research Advisory Committee is chaired by Len Syme (Chair of the School of Public Health, Department of Epidemiology, UC Berkeley) and includes researchers from Canada, the U.S., and Europe. A review of the Institute's current research projects is produced for the RAC meeting, and is available on our web site: www.iwh.on.ca. 🏠



INSTITUTE DIRECTOR OF RESEARCH TRANSFER APPOINTED



Jane Bartram

Institute President Terrence Sullivan announced the appointment of Jane Bartram as the Director of Research Transfer.

Bartram previously acted as Assistant Deputy Minister of Integrated Services for Children in the Ministry of Community and Social Services and the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care. A speech language pathologist by training, she has also worked in a variety of policy roles in the Ministry of Health, including overseeing programs and policy in the rehabilitation area.

"I am very pleased that Jane has accepted to join the Institute at a time when our own research transfer program is fully developing and beginning to significantly engage our key stakeholders," said Sullivan. "Research transfer was confirmed as a key business function for the Institute in our last strategic plan and we look forward to her leadership in extending and enriching that program."

NEW RESEARCH PUBLICATIONS RELEASED

The Institute has released more than 10 new papers as part of its Working Paper series. These publications include: #95, *Downsizing and Industrial Restructuring in Relation to Changes in Psychosocial Conditions of Work in British Columbia Sawmills* (A Ostry et al.); #109, *Chiropractors & Return to Work: The Experiences of Three Canadian Focus Groups* (P Côté et al.); and #112, *Job Satisfaction, Upper Extremity Musculoskeletal Disorders, and Absenteeism: An Investigation Using Path Analysis* (J M Smith et al.). For a list of these and other publications available from the Institute, contact Laura Maniago by e-mail, info@iwh.on.ca, or by phone, (416) 927-2027 Ext. 2101. **A revised publication catalogue is available on our web site, www.iwh.on.ca.**

Introducing the

National Awards of Excellence in Disability Management

The National Institute of Disability Management and Research (NIDMAR) has established a new National Awards program recognizing outstanding achievements of organizations and individuals who have championed disability management. To receive a nomination form or for more information, visit www.nidmar.ca or call: 250 724-4344/8745 or 613 260-2951. Deadline for nominations is May 31, 2000.



National Institute of Disability Management and Research™

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