

# at work

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

## This Issue

### For Clinicians

IWH chiropractors honoured; CIHR funds research on health-care workers.

### For Workplace

Study examines return to work for HIV/AIDS survivors; Second stage of UNITE study going ahead.

### For Policy

New compensation publication available.

### For Researchers

IWH releases new working papers.

### This Issue's Supplement

The process of *research transfer* has become a core business of the Institute. The challenge of effectively transferring the knowledge of a research organization is discussed in this month's issue of *Infocus*.

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](mailto:atwork@iwh.on.ca).



**Research Excellence  
Advancing Employee Health**

## Getting a grip on RSI

**D**espite widespread changes in the workplace from “physical” to more service-oriented and office work, Repetitive Strain Injuries (RSIs) continue to be the source of immense personal and societal costs.

RSIs, also known in the occupational health research community as work-related musculoskeletal disorders (WMSDs), include a range of problems that lead to pain and disability in the neck, arms, shoulders, and the hands.

These disorders account for approximately one in five compensation claims, making it an important area of research. Scientists at the Institute for Work & Health have been conducting leading-edge research into WMSDs for many years. The growing body of research at the Institute strongly demonstrates that when examining the risk factors for WMSDs, and highlighting potential interventions, it is essential to consider a broad range of *physical* and *psychosocial* factors. These factors are concerns for many workplaces, ranging from the manufacturing sector to the service industry and office work setting.



### PROJECTS UNDER WAY

The Institute is now in its fifth year of a WMSD study at a major daily newspaper. This research has shown that WMSDs are associated with physical factors such as keyboarding time, non-optimal screen position, and workstation-worker mismatch. It has also highlighted key psychosocial risk factors, including work organizational issues such as weekly deadlines, intensified workload, increasing requirements for interdependency among tasks, high job demands and low decision latitude, and low social support.

Another Institute initiative is a collaborative project with the University of Waterloo and the Union of Needletrades, Industrial and Textile Employees (UNITE). The first part of this project looked at the physical and workplace organizational factors that contribute to WMSDs. The second phase of the project is set to include implementing and evaluating ergonomics programs aimed at the prevention of WMSDs among clothing workers (see article on pg 3).

There are contentious issues associated with WMSDs which have also been a focus for Institute researchers. Limited agreement among stakeholders on the causes, risk-factors, or required interventions for WMSDs impedes action. Using an innovative research methodology called “Future Search,” the Institute coordinated workshops that brought together representatives from groups with different perspectives and tried to create common ground on this set of occupational health problems. The workshops were the impetus for a multi-stakeholder RSI-benchmarking project now under way in numerous worksites. 🏠

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.

#### CHAIR

**Lorna Marsden**  
President and Vice Chancellor  
*York University*

#### VICE-CHAIRS

**Marilyn Knox**  
President, Nutrition  
*Nestlé Canada, Inc.*

**Mark Rochon**  
President & CEO  
*Toronto Rehabilitation Institute*

#### CHAIR EMERITUS

**Fraser Mustard**  
Head  
*The Founders Network of The Canadian Institute for Advanced Research*

#### DIRECTORS

**Lesley Bell**  
Chief Executive Officer  
*Ontario Nurses' Association*

**Linda Jolley**  
Vice-President, Policy & Research  
*Workplace Safety & Insurance Board*

**Andrew King**  
Executive Director  
*Occupational Health Clinics for Ontario Workers*

**Pearl MacKay-Blake**  
Executive Vice President  
*United Food & Commercial Workers International Union (UFCW) Local 1000A*

**Rosemary McCarney**  
Businesswoman  
Toronto

**Heather Munroe-Blum**  
Vice-President  
Research & International Relations  
*University of Toronto*

**John O'Grady**  
Labour Market Consultant, Toronto, Ontario

**Dorothy Pringle**  
Member, Board of Directors  
*Workplace Safety & Insurance Board*

**Terrence Sullivan**  
President  
*Institute for Work & Health*

**Len Syme**  
Professor Emeritus, School of Public Health  
Department of Epidemiology  
*University of California at Berkeley*

**George Thomson**  
Executive Director  
*National Judicial Institute*  
Ottawa, Ontario

**Ed Welch**  
Director  
Workers' Compensation Center  
*Michigan State University*

**Glen Wright**  
Chair  
*Workplace Safety & Insurance Board*



# Clinical

## MAGAZINE NAMES IWH RESEARCHERS TO TOP 20

**P**ierre Côté and Jill Hayden, both members of the Institute's research department, were named to *Chiropractic Business* magazine's list of the top 20 chiropractic leaders under 40.

Dr. Côté has been at the Institute since 1996 and was featured in Issue 12 of *At Work*. He is the author of award-winning publications, as well as a recipient of numerous research grants and fellowships, including a Doctoral Fellowship from NHRDP. In 1999, the Canadian Chiropractic Association named him Researcher of the Year. He is currently a PhD candidate in Epidemiology at the University of Toronto.

Dr. Jill Hayden joined the Institute in 1999 and is pursuing a graduate degree in Clinical

Epidemiology at the University of Toronto. Since coming to the Institute, she has been involved in several research projects in the areas of low back pain (LBP)

outcome measurement, and prediction of outcome.

"The Institute provides a wonderful opportunity to work with other researchers



Pierre Côté



Jill Hayden

and health professionals in a multidisciplinary environment," says Hayden. "The combined experience and expertise of the scientists will not only facilitate my thesis research, but also foster my growth as an independent researcher."

Hayden's thesis work at the Institute focuses on the development, refinement, and implementation of a clinical decision aid tool to assist clinicians in determining the appropriate management of acute LBP. This important work has the potential to enhance management of acute LBP, and to reduce unnecessary costs while maintaining quality of care and patient satisfaction.

Hayden is also extensively involved with the Canadian Memorial Chiropractic College (CMCC) and the Canadian Chiropractic Association (CCA), where she is currently helping to update and refine the CCA Clinical Practice Guidelines. She has also contributed to the development of the Back Informed Programme, and is a part-time lecturer and committee member at CMCC. Recently, she has received an MRC-CCA Fellowship Award (1999) and a University of Toronto Open Fellowship Award (2000). 🏆

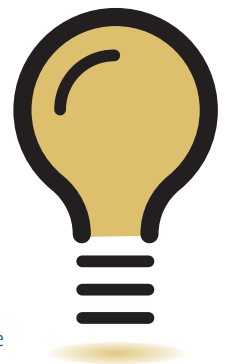
## CIHR ANNOUNCES FUNDING FOR HEALTH-CARE WORKER STUDY

IWH researcher, Mieke Koehoorn was among the recipients of funding in the recent grant announcements from the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR). Koehoorn and her team will be exploring the (To be continued on page 3 ➡)

## WEB SITE UPDATE: RESEARCH CONTENT ENHANCED

The research section on the Institute's Web site has been significantly expanded to provide users with more information about our research. The content in the new research section has more than doubled from the previous version that was available.

- Each of the Institute's three research areas (Health Services Research, Monitoring & Evaluation; Workplace Studies; and Population/Workforce Studies) has its own section which includes:
    - a descriptor of the area's focus and goals
    - a summary of current research projects
    - Institute publications that may be relevant and of interest to users
    - a staff listing
  - Data & Information Systems, Research Transfer, Return-to-Work Studies, Special Projects and Institute Senior Staff bios are also featured in the new research section.
  - The Research Projects Catalogue, which was produced for the Institute's Research Advisory Committee, can also be found on the left-hand navigation bar. This catalogue provides detailed information about each area's research projects.
  - To evaluate the site's effectiveness, a Web user survey called *Tell Us What You Think*, has been launched so that we can obtain your feedback and consider any ideas or suggestions you may have about how we can improve the site.
- To access the new research section, log onto <http://www.iwh.on.ca> and click the research link on the left-hand side.





# Workplace

## RETURNING TO WORK A TOUGH DECISION FOR HIV/AIDS SURVIVORS

The changing nature of HIV/AIDS treatment means that many people are able and want to return to work to regain the benefits of working life. But according to a recently completed study, these long-term HIV/AIDS survivors must weigh the benefits of work against the potential costs before making their decision.

The study, by Institute researchers Sue Ferrier and John Lavis, suggests that changes have to be made by employers, insurers, and government because barriers to employment can outweigh the benefits for HIV/AIDS survivors returning to work.

"I think the major point is that with the advent of antiretroviral medications, people who have been on long-term disability due to HIV/AIDS can entertain the possibility of returning to work, but that return is unlikely when the benefits of paid work can be obtained in other ways, and the costs and barriers related to returning to work are too high," says Ferrier.

Some of the benefits of paid work include the time structure a work day provides, social contacts, activity, status, and identity. The costs identified in the study include a fear of job loss and loss of benefits, uncertainty about effects work will have on health, and lower income or fewer benefits.

The researchers are now examining the applicability of the model to other chronic illnesses such as diabetes, multiple sclerosis, and heart disease. 🏡

*More information about the study, including the full text of the report, is available on the Web site: [www.returntowork.org](http://www.returntowork.org) or by contacting Sue Ferrier at the Institute, [sferrier@iwh.on.ca](mailto:sferrier@iwh.on.ca).*

## \$250,000 IN FUNDING CONFIRMED FOR SECOND STAGE OF WMSD PROJECT

Phase II of a study investigating work-related musculoskeletal disorders (WMSDs) in the clothing industry has just started, following a successful funding application.

The study is a collaborative effort of the Union of Needletrades Industrial and Textile Employees (UNITE), the University of Waterloo, the Occupational Health Clinics for Ontario Workers and the Institute for Work & Health. Twenty-nine Ontario garment manufacturers participated in the first phase, which was completed in late 2000. It included an analysis of lost-time injury data, the administration of a questionnaire and professional ergonomic assessments. A report is now available on the UNITE Web site ([www.unite-svti.org](http://www.unite-svti.org)) and includes a detailed analysis of common ergonomic problems and solutions in the clothing industry.

Phase II will be led by Jonathan Eaton (UNITE) and Richard Wells (University of Waterloo) as co-principal investigators. Three researchers from the Institute — Mickey Kerr, Sue Ferrier, and Michael Polanyi — will be part of the research team. Work on this phase is expected to continue until February of 2003.

Funding for both phases of the project was provided by the Ontario Workplace Safety & Insurance Board's Research Advisory Council. An article in the March 2000 issue of *At Work* provides more details on the first phase. 🏡

*For more information on the UNITE study, please contact Dee Kramer at IWH: (416) 927-2027 Ext. 246, [dkramer@iwh.on.ca](mailto:dkramer@iwh.on.ca).*

## U.S. WORKERS' COMPENSATION SYMPOSIUM ANNOUNCED

*The 25th Annual Meeting of the National Symposium on Workers' Compensation will be held on July 15-18, 2001. Institute Board Member Ed Welch and John F. Burton Jr. will once again serve as co-directors of the event.*

*In response to requests for a more accessible location, the symposium is being held at the Talbott Hotel in Chicago. A preliminary program is currently being drafted, and additional information will be posted at either: [www.lir.msu.edu/wcc](http://www.lir.msu.edu/wcc) or [www.workerscompresources.com](http://www.workerscompresources.com). A conference brochure will be available in early April. 🏡*

## WORKCONGRESS 5

*More than 400 people from 17 countries have registered for the 5th International Congress on Work Injuries Prevention, Rehabilitation and Compensation in Adelaide, Australia this March. The revised provisional program and online registration are available on the Web site: [www.workcongress5.org](http://www.workcongress5.org). The regular fee is available until February 22, 2001. 🏡*

*(Continued from page 2)*

health of health-care workers. The project will examine the determinants of health among health-care workers, and through collaborative relationships with decision-makers, use the findings to encourage changes that promote worker health in the industry.

The first phase of the study will compare differences in various health measures across demographic, occupational, and workplace groups and investigate the extent to which these differences have changed or remained the same from 1985 to 1999. The next phase of the study will examine factors associated with the risk of musculoskeletal and mental disorders among health-care workers with a focus on workplace level indicators.

Koehoorn was the recipient of the Mustard Fellowship for 1999-2001. Co-investigators on this project are Donald Cole (IWH), Selahadin Ibrahim (IWH), Aleck Ostry (UBC) and Clyde Hertzman (UBC). 🏡



# Policy Makers

## WORKERS' COMPENSATION NEWSLETTER LAUNCHES

A new publication focusing on workers' compensation issues is now available from the United States.

*Workers' Compensation Policy Review* will include articles and data focusing on the worker's compensation program (predominantly U.S.) as well as material on the workers' disability system. A companion Web site, which is listed on the Institute's Web site in the "Links"

section, features information on upcoming events and publications of interest to readers.

The editor, John F. Burton Jr., previously maintained the newsletter *John Burton's Workers' Compensation Monitor*. Burton is a professor in Labor Studies and Employment Relations at Rutgers and coordinates John Burton's Workers' Compensation Resources, a Web site. 🏡

*More information, including instructions for subscribing or receiving a sample copy of *Workers' Compensation Policy Review*, is available online: [www.workerscompresources.com](http://www.workerscompresources.com).*



# Research

## NEW PUBLICATIONS:

**F**or more information on these publications, or to place an order, visit our Web site ([www.iwh.on.ca](http://www.iwh.on.ca)) or contact Greer Palloo at the Institute (416-927-2027, Ext. 2131 or [info@iwh.on.ca](mailto:info@iwh.on.ca)).

## WORKING PAPERS

*Are you better? A qualitative study of the meaning of recovery.* D E Beaton, V Tarasuk, J N Katz, J G Wright, C Bombardier (#97)

*A taxonomy for responsiveness.* D E Beaton, C Bombardier, J Katz, J G Wright (#98)

*Cost-Effectiveness studies of medical and chiropractic care for occupational low-back pain: A critical review of the literature.* M L Baldwin, P Côté, J W Frank, W G Johnson (#111)

*The treatment of neck and low-back pain: Who seeks care? Who goes where?* P Côté, J D Cassidy, L Carroll (#117)

*Gender, class, work-related stress, and health: Towards a power-centred approach.* A S Brooker, J Eakin (#116)

*Towards common ground and action on repetitive strain injuries: An assessment of a Future Search conference.* M F D Polanyi (#121)

*Communicative action in practice: Future Search and the pursuit of an open, critical and non-coercive large group process.* M F D Polanyi (#122)

## OCCASIONAL PAPERS

*A Review of the Institute for Work & Health's Accreditation Program* D McKenzie (#19)

## GRAND ROUNDS

**Work Organization Factors and Musculoskeletal Injuries Among Health Care Workers.** Mieke Koehoorn, PhD

Provides an overview of the relationship between work organization factors and employee health outcomes, in particular musculoskeletal injuries. The results of a

cohort study of health care workers in a large acute care hospital in British Columbia are presented, providing evidence linking work organization factors such as job control and workload levels, along with demographic and biomechanical factors, to elevated risks of both upper- and lower-body musculoskeletal injuries resulting in a compensation claim (Video Tape & Booklet). 🏠

**Measuring & Managing Occupational Health & Safety - Methods for driving continuous OHS improvement.** *March 28-29, 2001, The Holiday Inn on King, Toronto.*

Learn from your peers how leading companies are using proactive performance to improve employee well-being, drive down insurance rates and increase productivity. Featuring a keynote presentation from **Institute for Work & Health** president Terrence Sullivan, along with presentations from the Canadian Centre for Occupational Health & Safety (CCOHS), DuPont Canada, Sears Canada, Dofasco, Celestica International and more. Call 1-800-882-8684 for more information, or check out [www.iqpc.com](http://www.iqpc.com).

## IWH News

### STAFF

The Research Transfer team is pleased to welcome Kathy Knowles Chapeskie as the new Manager, Communications. She comes to the Institute from the Institute for Clinical Evaluative Sciences where she was the Manager of the Research Transfer Unit.

### AWARDS

Mickey Kerr, a Workplace Studies Scientist at the Institute, was awarded a research grant in the 2000 Open Grants Competition of the Canadian Health Services Research Foundation, which is co-sponsored by the Province of Ontario. Kerr won for his work investigating the health of nurses, and the effects of hospital restructuring and changing work characteristics.

### EVENTS

Institute President Terrence Sullivan will be chairing an executive roundtable at the 2001 Wellness Conference – Sustaining Performance and Organizational Health. The roundtable will engage executives of leading organizations in a discussion on workplace health and wellness. The conference is taking place in Toronto on March 7-8 and more information is available at [www.conferenceboard.ca](http://www.conferenceboard.ca).



Published by **Institute for Work & Health**  
250 Bloor Street East, Suite 702, Toronto, ON Canada M4W 1E6  
Tel: (416) 927.2027 Fax: (416) 927.4167  
Email: [atwork@iwh.on.ca](mailto:atwork@iwh.on.ca) Website: [www.iwh.on.ca](http://www.iwh.on.ca)  
Manager, Communications: Kathy Knowles Chapeskie

Editor: Chris St. Croix

Design: Vigeon Design & Associates

Photography: Larry Newland

Contributors: Dee Kramer, Katherine Lukewich

Issue #20 February 2001 ISSN # 1261-5148

© Copyright 2001

The Institute for Work & Health operates with the support of the Ontario Workplace Safety & Insurance Board.

