

at work

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

This Issue

For Clinicians

Institute collaborates with physiotherapists; News from Cochrane Back Review Group.

For Workplace

Ergonomics handbook for clothing industry released; How to research health and safety.

For Policy

IWH student awarded for Masters work; New funding for research on decision-makers.

For Researchers

New privacy legislation and researchers; IWH holds annual meeting of research committee.

Also... IWH on the move

Effective June 15, 2001, the Institute will have moved to new offices. See IWH News on pg. 6 for details.

This Issue's Supplement

Are you better? IWH collaborating on research into the issues surrounding clinician and patient assessment of wellness.

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.



**Research Excellence
Advancing Employee Health**

Balancing Work and Family

Work and family—both offer many rewards, both can be extremely demanding. What impact do these multiple roles and their competing demands have on a person's health? Is there a relationship between work-family conflict and a parent's engagement in health risk behaviours, such as smoking and unhealthy eating habits? What can policymakers and workplaces do to help parents of young children achieve a "healthy" balance between home and work life?

These are some of the questions that Institute for Work & Health scientist Renée-Louise Franche will address in a three-year study examining the impact of multiple roles on parents with young children. A group of women, who will be taking maternity leave, and their partners, will be followed over time as part of the project.

Previous studies investigating work-family balance have focused on mental health or work-related issues such as stress, absenteeism and productivity. "Our research will focus on the impact of multiple roles on parental health risk behaviors and health," says Franche. "It will give us insight into factors that might be amenable to policy changes, such as work conditions, child care policies, and leave benefits."

Recent studies show that 46 per cent of Canadians feel moderate to heavy stress trying to balance their home and work lives.

According to a recent Heart and Stroke Foundation survey, 29 per cent of women, and 21 per cent of men feel overwhelmed by the demands of family life. While there is evidence that individuals who have multiple roles tend to be healthier and happier, when

the workload exceeds a certain threshold, the costs begin to outweigh the benefits.

"It is clear from the current literature that parents, especially women, feel they are caught between the pressures of caregiving, the financial need to work, and their own

personal aspirations," says Franche.

Her study, which was recently funded by the Social Sciences & Humanities Research Council, involves a multidisciplinary group of researchers from across the province. Co-investigators are Cam Mustard from the Institute, and Bruce Minore of Lakehead University.

Franche and her colleagues will be following two groups of women who work in urban hospitals and their partners. The first group will be composed of women who will be taking a maternity leave. The second, the comparison group, will comprise women who are neither pregnant nor parenting very young children.

Three hospitals are involved in the study: University Health Network in Toronto, Thunder Bay General Hospital, and The Ottawa Hospital. *(To be continued on page 6)*



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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Clinical

SHOULDER INJURIES FOCUS OF IWH, PHYSIOTHERAPY COLLEGE COLLABORATION

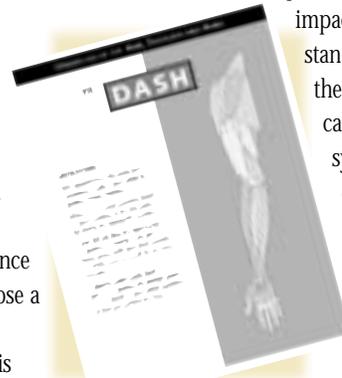
In 2000, the Institute for Work & Health partnered with the College of Physiotherapists of Ontario (CPO) for their Practice Review. The Practice Review process is part of the CPO's quality assurance program — each year they choose a clinical issue and systematically gather practice information. This review used the Institute's DASH Outcome Measure as part of a questionnaire package for patients receiving physiotherapy for shoulder injuries — one of the most common conditions treated by physiotherapists. The CPO will use the data to add to their information about physiotherapy practice patterns and strengthen their peer audit model. The data collected will also be used by the Institute to do further research into the measurement properties of the DASH.

Health professionals examining the effectiveness of care often rely on impairment

measures, such as range of motion and strength. While impairment measures are important, the patient's own perceptions of the injury's impact can be gathered using a standardized measurement tool, such as the DASH. Together, this information can be used by clinicians to systematically and comprehensively demonstrate quality of care. Also, standardized measures allow comparisons to be made across patients and groups of patients.

This project involved 90 randomly chosen physiotherapists throughout southwest and central Ontario and collected data on the treatment and outcomes of approximately 400 patients. In addition, the therapists provided feedback on their recommended approaches to patient care for shoulder disorders for two typical case scenarios. Participating therapists will receive their data compared to the aggregate data in the summer of 2001. Results of the project will be shared with all physiotherapists across Ontario in the fall of 2001. 🏡

For more information on this project, contact **Dee McKenzie**, at 416-927-2027 ext. 2157 or by e-mail [dmckenzie@iwh.on.ca]. To learn more about the DASH or to order a copy, visit the Institute's Web site [www.iwh.on.ca].



NEW REVIEWS OF TREATMENT FOR LOW-BACK PAIN FROM THE COCHRANE COLLABORATION BACK REVIEW GROUP



The Cochrane Collaboration Back Review Group (BRG), housed at the Institute, has recently released systematic reviews looking at the effectiveness of two treatments for low-back pain—*injection therapy and multidisciplinary rehabilitation*.

Low-back pain is the leading cause of workplace disability, affecting 60 to 85 per cent of the working population.

In the most recently published review, the BRG determined that injection therapy is not an effective pain treatment for patients with low-back pain.

In a review of the medical literature, most of the 21 studies included in the review concluded that the use of epidural, joint and local injections provide no significant pain improvement for

patients experiencing at least one month of low-back pain. There was some evidence, however, for short-term pain relief using epidural injections.

The BRG also concluded that more thorough research is required using quality randomized controlled trials to examine injection therapy versus the use of placebo to determine injection therapy effectiveness.

Another review, released in February, found that an early multidisciplinary rehabilitation program that includes a workplace visit can reduce sick time among workers with sub-acute low-back pain.

The worksite visits involved a meeting with at least the worker and their supervisor, but may also have involved representatives from union and management. Two trials, which examined more than 230 patients from Canada and Sweden, were reviewed for this study.

Both of these reviews were published in the medical journal *Spine*. 🏡

To view the Cochrane Back Review Group's latest research abstracts, go to the Institute's Web site (www.iwh.on.ca), click on the Publications link, then Cochrane Back Group Reviews. To view the news releases, click on the Contact and Information section, then Media Contacts.



Workplace

CERTIFICATION PART TWO: THE NEXT STEP TOWARDS SAFER WORKPLACES

By January 1, 2002, thousands of members of Ontario's workplace Joint Health and Safety Committees (JHSCs) will have completed a new level of customized health and safety training – Workplace-Specific Hazard Training – that has been established under the authority of the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act.

The Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB) is organizing the rollout of Workplace-Specific Hazard Training, which is the second required stage of the certification training. This new program builds on the success of the first stage – Basic Certification Training – that has been required since 1993. Today, approximately 70,000



JHSC members have completed Basic Certification Training, which covers issues common to all workplaces, such as health and safety laws, hazard identification and control, investigation techniques and prevention resources.

“If you've taken on the responsibility of being a representative on a JHSC, it's important to understand the general principles of health and safety,” says Ron Lovelock, the WSIB's Director of Prevention Services. “However, it's also crucial for representatives to have a good grasp of the hazards in their specific workplace. That's why Workplace-Specific Hazard Training will help make our workplaces even safer in the future.” Between now and Dec. 31, 2001, at least one worker and one management representative from most JHSCs in the province will take

Workplace-Specific Hazard Training. JHSCs are required in most workplaces employing 20 or more workers. In fact, many JHSC members – particularly in the construction industry – have already completed this additional level of training.

“Workplace-Specific Hazard Training is designed to help people identify, assess and control hazards that have caused, or could potentially cause, injuries or illnesses in their workplace,” says Ron Lovelock. “Each workplace will determine its training needs based on the results of a workplace hazard assessment, which is conducted by the employer in consultation with the workplace JHSC.”

In addition to examining the workplace and its safety record, the assessment process may also entail examining other applicable sources of information, such as the Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System (WHMIS) inventory, Material Safety Data Sheets, WSIB reports, incident/illness records, JHSC minutes, previous inspection reports and input from workers.

Employers in certain industry sectors will have the option of participating in sector-specific training programs endorsed by sector representatives. Those industry sectors are construction, long-term health care, acute health care, community health care, logging, sawmills/veneer plywood, and electrical and utilities. Other sector-specific programs are in development.

The WSIB is working with the Ministry of Labour and Ontario's 14 health and safety associations to successfully implement this new program. Employers can find out more about Workplace-Specific Hazard Training by contacting their health and safety association or the WSIB.

“Safe workplaces are good for business and Ontario has some of the safest workplaces in the world,” says Ron Lovelock. “But our goal is to eliminate all workplace injuries and illnesses. Workplace-Specific Hazard Training will help us to achieve that goal.”

SEARCHING FOR AND JUDGING RESEARCH

The field of occupational health & safety is changing. Every day, health & safety specialists, joint health & safety committee members, and occupational health practitioners must weigh and assess large amounts of information.

How would you go about locating the latest information on hearing loss, musculoskeletal injuries, depression, or violence in the workplace? Where would you go for information? How would you judge whether your source of information is credible and reliable?

A workshop at the Industrial Accident Prevention Association (IAPA) annual conference in Toronto on April 2nd, led by Institute scientist Donald Cole and research transfer associate Dee Kramer, addressed some of these questions. It explored how to assess and weigh the significance of

information, the credibility of the source, and the accuracy of the data. Cole led a discussion on how to appraise and judge both the source of the information, and the information itself.

This interactive workshop explored the kinds of questions that participants have to deal with in their daily work, and helped the participants develop skills for identifying what needs to be investigated.

The workshop leaders also discussed how to connect with experts and how to network. Getting in touch with knowledgeable sources is an excellent way to assure timeliness and accuracy of information. There are a variety of sources of information, including the Internet, databases, journals, magazines, books, newsletters, and newspapers. The workshop looked at timeliness, issues of controversy, and issues of balance. 🏠

For more information on this workshop, contact Dee Kramer at the Institute [dkramer@iwh.on.ca or 416-927-2027, Ext. 2146].

For more information call the Workplace Safety & Insurance Board Prevention Customer Service Line at 416-344-1016 or 1-800-663-6639 or visit www.wsib.on.ca and click on Prevention.



Workplace

EVALUATING SAFETY PROGRAMS FOCUS OF NEW GUIDE

A new guide for evaluating workplace safety interventions will soon be available. The book will provide students, researchers and practitioners with the tools and concepts needed to conduct evaluations of injury prevention initiatives and safety programs.

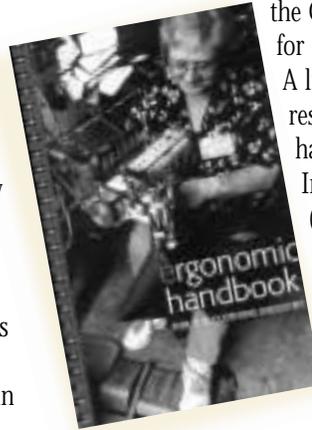
The handbook — *Guide to Evaluating the Effectiveness of Strategies for Preventing Work Injuries* — was prepared by as a joint project of the Institute and the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH). The project was led by Lynda Robson, a Research Associate at the Institute & Harry Shannon, Senior Scientist.

The book will be available in a downloadable format on the Institute's Web site (www.iwh.on.ca) in early April of 2001. A print version will be published by NIOSH in May. 🏡

HANDBOOK MAKES SEWING SAFER

A recently released ergonomic handbook targets workers and managers in the clothing industry. The handbook, which has been very positively received, was produced by the Union of Needletrades, Industrial and Textile Employees (UNITE). It is designed as a starting point for improving working conditions in the industry.

The handbook provides an introduction to ergonomics, and outlines common ergonomic problems associated with clothing manufacturing. Most importantly, the handbook provides solutions to some of these problems along with recommendations for reducing the risk of injury.



The book is based on research conducted by the Institute, UNITE, and the Occupational Health Clinics for Ontario Workers (OHCOW). A link to the full text of the research report (not the handbook) is available on the Institute's Web site (www.iwh.on.ca). Copies of the Ergonomic Handbook are available from UNITE (1-800-268-4064) and plans are under way to make it available online.

As highlighted in the February issue of *At Work*, the next phase of this research project is getting under way. The researchers will be investigating a variety of intervention models, and will be working at three manufacturing plants. 🏡



Policy Makers

STUDENT'S WORK HONOURED AT COMPETITION

Jacob Etches, a student researcher at the Institute, recently received first prize at the University of Toronto's Community Health Student Research Competition. His presentation focused on the findings of his Masters thesis work. His research found that the socio-economic characteristics of Ontario neighbourhoods do not appear to be associated with adult health and disability once the age, sex, education, and income of individual residents have been taken into account.

Etches has been at the Institute for over a year, and recently defended his Masters thesis.

After completing his BSc at the University of Toronto, Etches began looking for opportunities for research in the field of social epidemiology



Jacob Etches
Student Researcher

and population health research. He cites the quality of the Institute's research culture, combined with valuable mentorship, as an important factor in choosing to come here. He is working under the supervision of the Institute's Scientific Director, Cameron Mustard.

Since arriving at the Institute, he has worked with the Population/Workforce Studies area on a project addressing the definitions of disability and will soon be investigating trends in the prevalence of disability in Canada over the last fifteen years.

Etches plans to begin a PhD at the University of Toronto this fall, and to continue at the Institute part-time. His future research interests include assessing the population health impact of past and proposed state policies/programs, particularly those outside the health sector in education, housing and social security. 🏡

NEW RESEARCH EXAMINES DECISION-MAKER INVOLVEMENT

John Lavis, Associate Research Director at the Institute, has received significant funding from the Canadian Institutes of Health Research to examine whether health-services research is different when decision-makers are involved in the research process.

Some research suggests that involving decision-makers can enhance the transfer and uptake of research knowledge. As a result, traditional methods of knowledge transfer are being replaced by interactive models. Lavis' study will try to determine if the involvement of decision-makers is having an effect on other segments of the research process — topic selection, study design and execution, development of research products, and research transfer. If so, is that impact positive, negative, or both?

Lavis and his co-investigators from McMaster and Laval universities (Gregory Stoddart, Réjean Landry, Geoffrey Norman and Cathy Ann Charles) will examine the effects, if any, of the Canadian Health Services Research Foundation's incentive program to encourage decision-maker involvement in health-services research. 🏡



Research

IMPACT OF PENDING PRIVACY LEGISLATION ON RESEARCHERS

The Ontario government's proposed Personal Health Information Privacy Act (Bill 159) will formalize requirements for the use of health care information by the research community, including researchers at the Institute for Work & Health. In a submission to the legislature's Standing Committee on General Government in February, Institute Director of Research Transfer, Jane Bartram said, "Researchers respect the public's concerns about the protection of their privacy when it comes to health information, and strict research guidelines advocate and protect that privacy."

The Institute's submission reinforced the need to balance the right of individuals to

confidentiality and privacy with the benefits derived from research involving health information. The legislation requires researchers to acquire approval from research ethics boards, obtain consent from patients for the use of their data, collect only the information required and use the information for the purposes originally identified.

While the Institute agrees and currently follows these requirements, obtaining consent when researchers are using administrative databases (data originally collected for purposes other than research, such as physician reimbursement) is not always practical or feasible. "These data are important as they add to our knowledge about diseases and their treatment, as well as the impact of health policies and system management, said Institute Scientist, Sheila Hogg-Johnson. "In

these instances, the data is analyzed and presented in ways that protects privacy as much as possible. All personal identifiers are removed and the information is never presented in a manner that might allow an individual to be identified."

Other best practices that protect confidentiality at the Institute include an oath of confidentiality signed by all researchers and staff, analysis of data at an aggregate level, and technical and security safeguards that protect the data that is collected and used for projects.

"Even if the legislation does not get forward, researchers will continue to employ what we consider 'best practices' for the handling of health information," says Bartram. "The public can be assured that confidentiality is considered paramount at the Institute." 🏔️

RESEARCH ADVISORY GROUP FOCUSES ON THE WORKPLACE

Every April, leading scientists in the field of work and health from Europe and North America arrive in Toronto to help shape the Institute's research strategy for the coming year. They are members of the Research Advisory Committee (RAC). The group is chaired by Len Syme, Professor Emeritus of Epidemiology, Division of Public Health Biology & Epidemiology School of Public Health, UC Berkeley.

This year, the two-day RAC meeting will include a strong emphasis on the workplace. The Institute's projects frequently take place within a workplace or are focused on making workplaces safer. The feedback offered by the RAC will help the Institute define research priorities in this area for the years ahead.

The first day will include a review of some of the Institute's major work in the area of workplace health. Institute staff will discuss the three large-scale workplace

studies — General Motors, The Toronto Star, and an auto parts company — the Institute has participated in. As well, the Workplace Studies group will outline current work on the health of health-care workers.

In the afternoon, time will be spent discussing the Institute's plans to complete future multi-workplace studies, which will allow researchers to develop more general approaches to workplace safety and intervention.

On the second day a plenary session will examine the wide range of projects currently under way at the Institute. 🏔️

RAC Members

Len Syme (Chair)
UC Berkeley, California, USA

Alan Wolfson (Vice-Chair)
Capital One, London, England

Robert Norman
Univ. of Waterloo, Canada

Michael Marmot
Univ. College London Medical School, England

Tony Culyer
Univ. of York, England

Clyde Hertzman
Univ. of British Columbia, Canada

J. Fraser Mustard
The Founders' Network
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Univ. of Göteborg, Sweden

Michele Battie
Univ. of Alberta, Canada

Johannes Siegrist
Univ. of Düsseldorf, Germany

Terrence J. Sullivan
Institute for Work & Health

Tores Theorell
The National Institute for Psychosocial
Factors and Health (IPM), Sweden

Rick Deyo
Univ. of Washington, USA

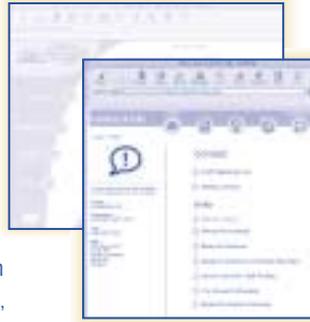
WEB SITE UPDATE

In an effort to make your Institute Web site experience more user-friendly, we are upgrading and improving the site on an ongoing basis. Recent changes to the Contact & Info section will help you quickly find contact and general Institute information.

Access the following pages by going to the home page www.iwh.on.ca, and clicking the Contact & Info link.

- Our staff listing, which was previously available in alphabetical format only, now also lists employees by department (administration, research transfer, workplace studies, etc.) Each employee's entry includes: name, job title, extension and e-mail address. Click on Staff Telephone Listing.
- A list of our senior staff has been updated to reflect the recent appointments announced at the Institute. Included in the list are our scientific and executive staffs. Each bio provides a brief descriptor, including research interests and educational background. Click on Senior Scientific Staff Bios.
- The media page, which is targeted to both commercial and trade media outlets, now lists the Institute's recent news releases, including a research alert about the latest Cochrane Back Review Group study. Click on Media Contacts.

Make sure to bookmark the site (www.iwh.on.ca) for easy and quick access to the most up-to-date Institute research.



(continued from page 1) This will enable a comparison between organizations of various sizes.

Women who are pregnant and their partners will be asked to complete a survey at three time points—during pregnancy, during maternity leave, and after returning to the workforce. The second group will complete the questionnaires at the same intervals. The survey will assess potential gender differences in role strain and identify “peak” timing of multiple role strain.

In the final phase of the project, the study results will be used to develop two types of targeted workshops. One will inform employees how to use strategies to improve their work-family balance. A second session will educate organizations about which alternative work arrangements, such as flexible hours, job sharing, and child care arrangements, are the most effective in reducing multiple role strain among employees with young children. 🏡

For more information about this project, please contact **Renée-Lousie Franche** at the Institute (rfranche@iwh.on.ca).

IWH News

IWH ON THE MOVE

Effective June 15, 2001 the Institute will be located in new offices on University Avenue in Toronto. Our telephone and fax numbers will remain the same, as well as our Web site and e-mail addresses. The complete address will be: 481 University Ave., 8th Floor, Toronto, Ontario, M5G 2E9.

STAFF

The Institute is pleased to welcome Sherra Salway to our Health Services Research, Monitoring and Evaluation group. Sherra has a MSc in Rehabilitation Sciences from the University of Toronto and will be working as a research associate in the area of “Instrument Intelligence” — developing a series of products involving measurement tools for musculoskeletal injuries.

NEWLY PUBLISHED

Lavis JL et al. “Work-related population health indicators.” (Formerly WP #99) *Journal of Canadian Public Health*, Jan-Feb 2001, Volume 92, No. 1, pp. 72–78.

Lavis JL, Farrant MR, Stoddart GL. “Barriers to employment-related healthy public policy in Canada.” (Formerly WP #69) *Health Promotion International*, 2001, 16(1): 9–20.

Côté et al. “The association between neck pain intensity, physical functioning, depressive symptomatology and time-to-claim-closure after whiplash.” (Formerly WP #94). *Journal of Clinical Epidemiology*, 54(2001) 275–286.

Li LC, Irvin E, Guzman J, Bombardier C. “Surfing for back pain sufferers - the nature and quality of back pain information on the Internet.” (Formerly WP #53). *Spine*, 26(5): 545–557, 2001.



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CSPAAT Commission de la sécurité professionnelle et de l'assurance contre les accidents du travail