

at work

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

This Issue

For Clinicians

Dutch scientist spends 2002 at the Institute

International forum on low-back pain research

For Workplaces

Student Profile: PhD student active with work and school

Researchers present findings at international scientific conference

For Policy-Makers

Understanding youth injury in the workplace

Mustard Fellow wins national research award

For Research Transfer

Partnering for safer, healthier workplaces

International RSI Awareness Day

This Issue's Supplement

The challenge of transferring research to work and health stakeholders

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

On-line Workplace Stress Survey Tool to be Launched

An on-line survey tool that measures workplace stress may help employers better understand the health and well-being of their employees and their work conditions. The tool is in its final stages of development.

"Workplace stress, which can lead to health risks, has become an increasingly important issue for organizations. They're looking for causes, explanations and solutions. We're designing a web-based tool that will help to determine stressors and their levels within an organization," says Institute Senior Scientist Dr. Harry Shannon, the research project's principal investigator. "The organization's results can be benchmarked externally with similar types of Canadian workers and comparisons can also be made internally, for example, across various departments."

This on-line tool is secure and protects employees' and employers' confidentiality, says Shannon. Once an organization signs up, a unique individual password is provided confidentially to each employee. This password must be entered before an employee can complete the survey.

"A comprehensive customized on-line report, which is accessed by workplace parties quickly and easily, highlights the stressful work conditions and flags areas for possible improvement. This information allows organizations to develop strategies to decrease



the level of stress their employees are experiencing and enhance their organizational health," says Dr. Fataneh Zarinpoush, a member of the research team. To further protect employees' confidentiality, the reports provide only aggregate information on the workplace as a whole and on subgroups of the organization.

The survey questions are based mainly on those contained in the Statistics Canada's National Population Health Survey and include topics such as job demands, job security, social support and job satisfaction. Among other topics are psychological distress, chronic life stressors (outside the workplace) and health measures.

For more information about this survey, contact Research Associate Fataneh Zarinpoush at fzarinpoush@iwh.on.ca or by phone at (416) 927-2027 ext. 2172.

The Institute for Work & Health is an independent, not-for-profit organization whose mission is to research and promote new ways to prevent workplace disability, improve treatment, and optimize 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

PRESIDENT

Stephen Bornstein
Institute for Work & Health

DIRECTORS

Lesley Bell
Chief Executive Officer
Ontario Nurses' Association

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

Andrew King
Department Leader, Health & Safety
United Steelworkers of America

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

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

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

Ed Welch
Director
Workers' Compensation Center
Michigan State University

Glen Wright
Chair
Workplace Safety & Insurance Board



Workplace

RESEARCHERS PRESENT FINDINGS AT INTERNATIONAL SCIENTIFIC CONFERENCE

Institute Senior Scientist Dr. Donald Cole presented some of his team's research results on workplace interventions at the 4th International Scientific Conference on Prevention of Work-Related Musculoskeletal Disorders this past fall.

The conference, which was held in The Netherlands, was attended by international experts in musculoskeletal research and clinical practices and provided a venue for researchers to exchange ideas on prevention, treatment, and dissemination.

Cole's presentation, entitled *Workplace Interventions: Program Implementation or Policy Change*, outlined

some of the findings from a worksite intervention at a large daily newspaper. It broadly described the research project's objectives, methods and program implementation, as well as the policy changes that occurred within the newspaper's offices.

To view Cole's presentation, go to the Institute's home page (www.iwh.on.ca) and click on Research. The presentation is located in the Workplace Studies section, under Publications/Presentations.

Other Institute presenters included: Dr. Mickey Kerr, Dr. Mieke Koehoorn and Dwayne Van Eerd. ▲

STUDENT PROFILE: PhD STUDENT ACTIVE WITH WORK AND SCHOOL

Research Associate Joanna Sale has been doing some juggling between work and her academic life.

For the past three years, Sale has been part of the Institute's Workplace Studies team.

She initially started as member of the Healthy Workplace project, and, more recently she's been involved in several research projects that focus on measurement in the workplace. These projects include: the development of an inventory of workplace instruments, examining demand and control in a large teaching hospital, and burnout in Ontario nurses.

"I am currently looking at the psychometric properties of the Maslach Burnout Inventory in a nursing population," Sale says. She recently helped complete work on a study with the Canadian Auto Workers that examined how job strain may be a predictor of burnout.

When Sale is not at the Institute, she's busy working towards her PhD in

Health Research Methodology at McMaster University.



Joanna Sale

Currently in the data collection stage for her thesis on cancer care employees' perceptions of research in their workplace, she hopes to have her thesis written by the end of 2002.

"Research is integral to the workplace culture of many cancer care settings. I'm interested in how that research is understood and viewed from the perspective of employees," she says.

Sale has a Master's of Science in Health Promotion Research from the University of British Columbia.

She wrote Institute Occasional Paper #18, *Decision Latitude and Psychological Job Demands: A Critique of Two Scales from the Job Content Questionnaire*. ▲

To order this paper, contact Administrative Assistant Hanh Ramond by e-mail at hramond@iwh.on.ca or by phone at: (416) 927-2027 ext. 2173.



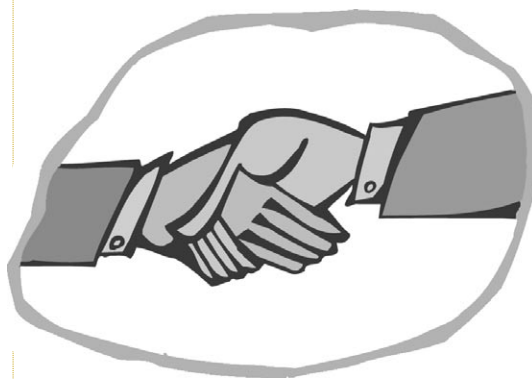
Research Transfer

PARTNERING FOR SAFER, HEALTHIER WORKPLACES

The concept of a working partnership between the Institute and Ontario's Health and Safety Associations (HSAs) is becoming a reality. The first meeting of an advisory group, consisting of representatives from several HSAs, was held last November. The members of this group come from the Health Care Health and Safety Association (HCHSA), the Industrial Accident Prevention Association (IAPA), the Workers Health and Safety Centre (WHSC), the Ontario Service Safety Alliance (OSSA), the Electrical & Utilities Safety Association (E&USA), and the Ontario Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB).

The goal of the advisory group is to provide a forum for strategic advice and linkages for research transfer activities between the Institute and the HSAs. It should be a worthwhile exchange, as the primary role of each HSA is to engage its

audience (member firms in their respective sector) and to assist their clients in improving the management of occupational health



and safety. The primary methods of interaction include consultation, training, and providing supporting tools and programs. This is in essence a knowledge transfer function. Typically, the transfer has involved best practices, rather than

being focused on research. The Institute will be able to offer insight for HSAs in determining when and how research may be applicable to the workplace.

Ultimately, the goal is to improve the effective workplace implementation of research findings. In return, the Institute can learn about the needs of the HSAs and workplace parties to improve their research transfer process and learn about new research issues and opportunities.

The advisory group will review existing research transfer opportunities, such as the Institute's *Healthy Workplace Balanced Scorecard*, and research on workplace organizational factors that impact on health. Both bodies of work have much to offer the workplace parties served by the advisory group membership. Updates on the progress of the advisory group will be featured in future issues of *At Work*. ▲▲

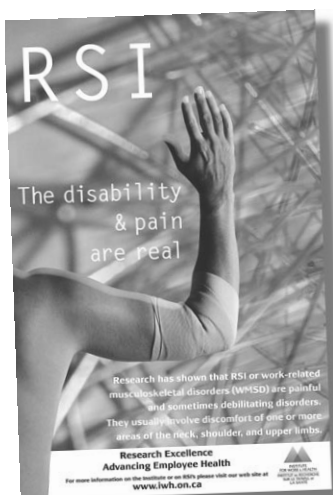
INTERNATIONAL RSI AWARENESS DAY FEBRUARY 28

Institute for Work & Health scientists have researched the causes and prevention of repetitive stress injury (RSI) for more than 10 years. RSI, or as the scientific community prefers to call it, a work-related musculoskeletal disorder (WMSD), can be defined as an injury to or disorder of muscles, tendons, and/or nerves caused or aggravated by work.

International RSI Awareness Day is observed on Feb. 29 as it's the only non-repetitive day in the calendar. This year, it will be observed on Feb. 28.

Researchers at the Institute have been involved in a number of studies that examine WMSDs. They include:

- The Toronto Star/SONG RSI Project: One of the most comprehensive



workplace-based research projects undertaken by Institute researchers, this study aims to reduce the burden of WMSDs among Star employees and provide recommendations on how to lessen their impact.

- WMSDs in the Clothing Industry: In its second phase, this project examines common ergonomic problems

and solutions in the industry. A report and an ergonomic handbook from phase one of this study are available on the Institute's web site.

This past month, Institute staff were involved in a conference on RSI prevention and compensation, hosted by the

Occupational Health Clinics for Ontario Workers.

In order to keep clinicians, workplace parties, employers' organizations, policy-makers, workers, unions and health and safety professionals informed of WMSDs and the Institute's latest research on this topic, the Institute has developed a fact sheet. It defines WMSDs and outlines some of the physical, psychosocial and workplace organizational factors that may contribute to greater rates of WMSDs.

The WMSD fact sheet will be available on the Institute's web site as of Feb. 21 at www.iwh.on.ca. On the home page, click on the Media Room link in the Spotlight section. Once inside the media room, click on *Work and Health Fast Facts*. ▲▲

Please see the web site update for further information on the media room.



UNDERSTANDING YOUTH INJURY IN THE WORKPLACE

Are workplace injuries more common among teens than adults? Stories of young people injured or killed on the job unfortunately are not rare. At a recent conference of the Association of Workers' Compensation Boards of Canada, partnering organizations unveiled the Canadian Life Quilt. This quilt will honour 100 young Canadians, aged 16 to 24, who have perished on the job.

In 1999, there were 4,623 lost-time claims filed for 15 to 19 year olds in Ontario. But in order to understand the true risk of injury among teenagers compared to other age groups, researchers must first determine the number of workers in each age bracket.

Dr. Curtis Breslin, an Institute Scientist, is trying to understand workplace injury among youth better.

"Currently, there is conflicting information in the published research on whether rates of workplace injury among young people are higher," says Breslin. "This may be because most of these reports do not take into consideration that many teenagers and young adults work part-time."

The study used a national survey conducted in 1993 that contained information on work injury and work hours over the year for a representative sample of Canadians. In the survey, 15 to 19 year olds reported working about one-third the number of hours that an adult worked over the year. When the injury rate was calculated based on full-time equivalents (FTE), the injury rate for 15 to 19 year olds was one in five. This adjusted rate for teen injury is more than

double the rate when the number of work hours is not taken into account and is more than double the injury rate for workers 25 and over. This higher rate of work injury among teens supports the targeted prevention efforts under way at the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB) and the Ministry of Labour.

This methodological work is a stepping stone for Breslin's youth research program at the Institute which will be unfolding over the next few years. The results of this study were reported at the first annual conference of the Canadian Association of Research on Work and Health (CARWH). The study was co-authored by Associate Scientist Dr. Mieke Koehoorn and Research Assistant Jason Pole. ▲▲

MUSTARD FELLOW WINS NATIONAL RESEARCH AWARD

Dr. Alina Gildiner, the Institute's current Mustard Fellow, was awarded one of this year's Canadian Policy Research Awards. She received one of the Graduate Student Prizes for her thesis work, *What's Past is Prologue: A Historical-Institutionalist Analysis of Public-Private Change in Ontario's Rehabilitation Health Sector, 1985-1999*. (See the October 2001 issue of *Infocus*.)

The Graduate awards were sponsored by the Government of Canada's Policy Research Initiative, the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, the Canadian Institutes of Health Research and the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council. The goal of the award is to encourage scholars, early in their career, to think through

and communicate how their research could inform future policy directions in Canada.

Recipients of the Canadian Policy Research Awards Graduate Prizes spent the first week of December in Ottawa. They attended a four-day seminar during which they were able to engage in discussions with some of the country's leading policy developers and to exchange ideas with experts in their area of research. They also attended the National Policy Research Conference and were honoured at a special awards dinner. "It was a great opportunity to meet with and listen to key federal policy-makers, and to hear first hand their experiences with current policy issues and how research knowledge fits in with decision-making," says Gildiner. ▲▲

McGill conference examines Canadian health-care challenges

The McGill Institute for the Study of Canada will hold its seventh annual conference on Feb. 15 and 16. Its theme, *Diagnostics & Solutions: Building Consensus for Canadian Health Care Reform*, aims to bring researchers, practitioners, policy-makers, students, and the general public together, to examine the challenges within Canada's health care system.

Former Institute president Dr. Terrence Sullivan will be presenting in *The Questions of Privatization* session and current Institute president Dr. Stephen Bornstein is chairing the session entitled *Is There a Crisis in Health Care Financing?*

To find out more about this conference visit the McGill Institute's web site at: <http://www.arts.mcgill.ca/programs/misc/health.htm>.



Clinical

DUTCH SCIENTIST SPENDS 2002 AT THE INSTITUTE



Dr. Maurits van Tulder

The Institute works with scientists from around the world and, from time to time, has the benefit of a colleague from another country joining our team here in Toronto on sabbatical. It is our pleasure in 2002 to welcome Dr. Maurits van Tulder of the Vrije University Medical Centre (VUMC) and the Institute for Research in Extramural Medicine (EMGO) in Holland.

Van Tulder is an epidemiologist with expertise in systematic reviews and the evidence relevant to management of low-back pain. He has worked extensively with the Institute-based Cochrane Collaboration Back Review Group, completing six reviews. He is a prolific author of dozens of journal articles, as well as books and book chapters.

During his year at the Institute, van Tulder will be engaged in a wide range of projects which will make use of his expertise in meta-analysis methodologies and in conducting systematic reviews. Of particular interest to researchers and clinicians in the field of low-back pain will be his presentation at the May 2002 Forum V (see article below) to be held in Montreal.

In addition, van Tulder plans to develop, in conjunction with Institute colleagues, a seminar for researchers and clinicians on systematic review and meta-analysis in the field of musculoskeletal disorders. This seminar will examine the technical aspects of evaluating evidence and will also focus on how evidence from systematic reviews can be best applied by clinicians. Van Tulder joined the Institute in January and will be with us until December 2002. ▲

INTERNATIONAL FORUM ON LOW-BACK PAIN RESEARCH

The Fifth International Forum for Primary Care Research on Low-back Pain will be held May 10 and 11, 2002 in Montreal. The event, which was to have taken place this past fall, had to be rescheduled following the events in the United States on Sept. 11.

"We have reopened registration for the conference and are accepting abstract submissions until March 1," says conference Co-chair Dr. Michel Rossignol, who is with McGill University and the Montreal Department of Public Health.

Fellow Co-chair, Dr. Claire Bombardier, a Senior Scientist at the Institute and Professor of Medicine at the University of Toronto, says representatives from some of Canada's top universities and research organizations, as well as research centres from around the world are expected to attend. "This two-day meeting is one of the largest global events

devoted to primary care research and treatment of patients with low-back pain," she adds.

The forum will feature a number of presentations and workshops on topical issues related to policy and the management of low-back pain including the latest research on treatment options, guideline usage and return-to-work challenges.

The forum is co-sponsored by the University of Toronto, McGill University, the Institute for Work & Health, Workplace Safety & Insurance Board of Ontario, Institut de recherche Robert-Sauvé en santé et sécurité du travail, Direction de la santé publique de Montréal-Centre, and Réseau provincial de recherche en adaptation-réadaptation FRSQ. ▲

For more information about the conference or to register, visit <http://www.lbpforum.org>.

WEB SITE UPDATE: MEDIA ROOM TO BE LAUNCHED www.iwh.on.ca

A one-stop shop for journalists, editors and producers will be launched on the Institute's web site so that the media can immediately find information related to work and health issues.

The media room, which has a direct link from the Institute's home page, provides reporters quick access to the Institute's latest research, story ideas and contact information.

A key feature of the media room is *e-Media Alert*, a service for which journalists can electronically sign up to receive immediate e-mail notification once a news release is available on the site.

Also included in this new section are:

- **Our Top Stories:** a suggested list of features, with a focus on work and health issues, that journalists may want to report on.
- **Work and Health Fast Facts:** easy-language one-pagers on a wide range of subjects including low-back pain, work-related musculoskeletal disorders, of rehabilitation, and others.
- **Our Experts:** access to our experts who can provide comment on a variety of issues including: low-back pain, stress in the workplace, and work-related musculoskeletal disorders.
- **Events Calendar:** A handy resource to keep up to date on important dates and events.

The media room will be launched on **Feb. 21**. To access it, go to the Institute's web site (www.iwh.on.ca) and click on the Media Room icon located in the Spotlight section.

For more information, contact Communications Associate Katherine Lukewich by e-mail at klukewich@iwh.on.ca or by phone at (416) 927-2027 ext. 2148.


STAFF ANNOUNCEMENTS

Carol Fancott has joined the Institute as Research Associate in the Health Services Research, Monitoring & Evaluation area. She will be working with Institute Scientist Renée-Louise Franche examining work/family balance issues.

Carol Holland is the Institute's new Production Coordinator and Graphic Designer. Carol is responsible for the design and layout of various Institute publications, including the newsletters, as well as other corporate publications.

Dr. Pierre Côté, DC, has been promoted to the position of Associate Scientist in Health Services Research, Monitoring & Evaluation. Côté, whose research includes examining issues related to patients with whiplash injuries and occupational low-back or neck pain, was previously a Research Fellow.

Institute Scientist **Dr. Mickey Kerr** was recently appointed to a tenure-track position as Assistant Professor, in the School of Nursing, Faculty of Health Sciences, at The University of Western

Ontario (UWO). Kerr is currently involved as a principal investigator or co-investigator on a number of projects looking at factors related to nurse health, including a CHSRF-funded project to monitor the health of nurses in Canada. Kerr, who will retain his appointment as an Institute Scientist while based at UWO, is also Adjunct Professor in the Department of Public Health Sciences, Faculty of Medicine at the University of Toronto. 

WORKING PAPERS SERIES

In 2001, the Institute's researchers added a number of titles to the working paper series on a variety of issues that are relevant to our stakeholders. Below is a list of the working papers that were added to our publications list this past year:

- *The ethics of using secondary data for record linkage in epidemiology: Is informed consent always required?* P Côté, C Mustard, J Frank. Working Paper #162.
- *Sense of coherence and emotional distress: Extent and type of construct overlap.* FC Breslin, S Ibrahim, G Hepburn, D Cole. Working Paper #155.
- *Examining the association between occupational position and the stability of sense of coherence in a Canadian working population.* P Smith, FC Breslin, DE Beaton. Working Paper #153.
- *Reflections on the role of health services research in public policy making.* J Lavis et al. Working Paper #135.
- *The views toward X-ray use in patients with acute low-back pain among chiropractors in an Ontario community.* C Ammendolia, C Bombardier, S Hogg-Johnson, R Glazier. Working Paper #133.
- *A comparison between the effort-reward imbalance and the demand control job strain models.* A Ostry, M Barrotevena, R Hershler, K Tesche, P Demers, CA Mustard, C Hertzman. Working Paper #130.

- *Work organization and musculoskeletal injuries among a cohort of health care workers.* M Koehoorn, PA Demers, C Hertzman, J Village, SM Kennedy. Working Paper #126.

- *The relationship between all-cause mortality and working life course psychosocial and physical exposures in the United States labor market from 1968-1992.* BC Amick et al. Working Paper #124.

- *Communicative action in practice: Future Search and the pursuit of an open, critical and non-coercive large group process.* MFD Polanyi. Working Paper #122.

- *Is position in the occupational hierarchy a determinant of decline in perceived health status?* C Mustard, M Vermeulen, J Lavis. Working Paper #120.

- *With health comes work? People living with AIDS consider returning to work.* SE Ferrier, JN Lavis. Working Paper #119.

- *Gender, class, work-related stress, and health: Towards a power-centred approach.* AS Brooker, J Eakin. Working Paper #116.

To order these or any other publications, contact Administrative Assistant Hanh Ramond at (416) 927-2027 x2173 or by e-mail at hramond@iwh.on.ca.

RECENT PUBLICATIONS

Existing classification systems for upper-limb work-related musculoskeletal disorders: A Review of the Literature. (Institute Working Paper # 141) D Van Eerd, DE Beaton, DC Cole, J Lucas, S Hogg-Johnson, C Bombardier.

The health of nursing personnel: A summary of research findings to inform the development of a national survey in Canada. (Institute Working Paper # 172) M Koehoorn, TJ Sullivan.

at work

Published by **Institute for Work & Health**
481 University Ave., Suite 800, Toronto, ON Canada M5G 2E9
Email: atwork@iwh.on.ca Web site: www.iwh.on.ca

Manager, Communications: **Kathy Knowles Chapeskie**

Editor: **Katherine Lukewich**

Layout & Design: **Carol Holland**

Contributors: **Kathy Knowles Chapeskie, Katherine Lukewich, Rhoda Reardon, Steve Oakley**

Issue #26 February 2002 ISSN # 1261-5148

© Copyright 2002

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