

Steps to better workplace health: Linking research with policy and practice

Wednesday, 5th December 2012

Abstracts

Workplace mental health

A Systems approach to workplace mental health, suicide prevention and positive mental health promotion. Dr Allison Milner and Dr Kathryn Page & Ms Kelly Tapley

The workplace is increasingly recognised as a location for providing mental health interventions (Kitchener & Jorm, 2004) and suicide prevention (Cross et al., 2007; Department of Health and Ageing, 2007). However, as yet, there has been little or no attempt at a systems-based integrated approach to addressing job stress, suicidality and mental health issues in Australian workplaces. Further, little research has looked at the ways in which employees can develop of positive mental health and wellbeing (Page & Vella-Brodrick, 2009, 2012). Thus far, most work-based interventions for suicidality and mental health have focused on providing education about mental health (secondary and tertiary interventions), but have not yet recognised the need to address the wider organisational-related causes of these problems (primary prevention) and promote psychologically healthy workplace practices. This presentation will provide an overview of the current work undertaken by Dr Allison Milner and Dr Kathryn Page in their roles as post-doctoral research fellows in the area of work, health and wellbeing, focusing in particular, on how these approaches could be integrated.

The health of migrant workers

The experiences of migrant workers after a work-related injury: A qualitative study from Toronto, Canada. Dr Agnieszka Kosny

During this presentation Agnieszka Kosny will discuss findings from a study examining migrant workers' experiences after a work-related injury, including their experiences with the workers' compensation board, health care providers and employers. One practical outcome of this study was the developed of a tool for migrant workers and staff at settlement agencies in Ontario, Canada. The purpose of the tool was to better prepare migrant workers for entry into the labour market by providing information about occupational health & safety and workers' compensation.

Perception and awareness of workplace risk among migrant workers in Australia.
Dr Alison Reid

In this presentation Alison Reid will discuss the findings from several focus groups and in-depth interviews conducted among a range of migrant workers from various countries. The specific focus of the interviews was to ascertain their understanding of occupational health and safety and awareness of physical and psychosocial workplace hazards.

Finding satisfying work: The experience of Migrants and Refugees after 4 years in Australia. Monica O'Dwyer and Stella Mulder (AMES)

In this presentation we will discuss the results of a 4 year longitudinal study that has followed 101 working age people who arrived in Australia with low levels of English. The study documents the employment pathways of the early years of settlement and seeks to understand the factors that influence these pathways. The most recent wave of this study focuses on how satisfied participants feel with their current employment situation.

Discussion

After the presentations, a group discussion will be facilitated by Alison Reid. It will be guided by the following questions:

- What are the pressing research needs related to migrant worker health and safety in Australia?
- How can community and academic researchers work collaboratively in this field? What are the challenges? How can they be overcome?
- How can we ensure that research leads to meaningful change?
- Are some groups more vulnerable in the workplace than others? Why? What can be done?

Clinical guidelines, disease registries and policy translation

Clinical Practice Guidelines on Acute Low Back Pain Management in Primary Care Assoc Prof Markus Melloh

The presentation will give an update on the clinical management of patients with acute non-specific low back pain (LBP) in primary care. It will provide a set of evidence-based recommendations on the management of acute LBP. For the diagnosis of acute LBP these include diagnostic triage, assessment of psychosocial risk factors, and imaging. Recommendations for the treatment of acute LBP are information and reassurance, advice to stay active, exercise therapy, analgesia, and spinal manipulation. Multidisciplinary treatment programmes in occupational settings may be an option for workers with LBP and sick leave for more than 4 weeks.

Work-related asthma Dr Ryan Hoy

Occupational asthma is the most common occupational lung disease in developed countries. Occupational exposures contribute to approximately 15% of adult onset asthma. This session will review current surveillance-based research of work-related asthma and discuss how this data can inform policy development.

Occupational Contact Dermatitis Clinical Perspectives and Policy Translation

Assoc Prof Rosemary Nixon

Occupational Contact Dermatitis is the most common form of occupational skin disease. It has consistently been recognised by Safe Work Australia as a National Priority Work-Related Disease. A number of countries have introduced legislation aimed at reducing exposure and preventing disease. Germany has introduced legislation to limit exposure to irritants and European legislation limits exposure to certain allergens. The success of such legislation has already been reported, including for a predominantly non-occupational allergen such as nickel and an occupational allergen, such as chromate. In Europe, the legislated addition of ferrous sulphate to cement has resulted in a decrease in chromate allergy in cement workers. However, information on the characteristics of the patients with OCD is limited, especially in Australia. Such information is likely to assist in identifying determinants of OCD and thereby lead to appropriate preventive strategies. This presentation will highlight the work of the Occupational Dermatology Research and Education Centre, located at the Skin and Cancer Foundation Melbourne and also discuss the use of clinic data for policy and practice outcomes.

Exposure Assessment in Translation

Dr Tessa Keegel, Dr Ewan MacFarlane, Dr Martine Dennekamp & Dr Fleur De Crespigny

Occupational and environmental exposure assessment is an essential part of epidemiological research in the fields of occupational and environmental health. Making accurate assessments of exposure can be complex and presents a range of challenges. The study design and population under study, the quality of available data and the historical nature of longitudinal research in this field are among the factors which affect the choice of exposure assessment method. Exposure assessment requires both creativity and scientific rigour to find and collect relevant information and to organise it systematically to enable accurate estimations of exposure to be assigned to study subjects for the purpose of epidemiological research.

This presentation will describe how researchers are using existing exposure data sources, and are also engaged in collecting new exposure data in collaboration with policy and industry partners. We will also explore the relationship between the researcher and policy/industry partners and how this relationship facilitates the translation of exposure research findings. Examples will be provided from various research projects utilizing existing and novel data sources. A partner from a government regulation agency will provide insight about the researcher-policy maker relationship and the translation of the research into policy and practice.