



OHSA(WA) Annual General Meeting

The Annual General Meeting of the Occupational Health Society of Australia (WA) was conducted on 22 January 2016.

The Chairperson provided a comprehensive report on the range of activities conducted during 2015 which included:

- Eight submissions to SafeWork Australia and State Government departments on a range of occupational health and hygiene issues.
- The conduct of, and participation in, conferences or seminars on four occasions.
- Publication of the Monitor newsletter on five occasions.
- Two requests to relevant State Ministers seeking representation in the development of occupational health regulations.

The Committee for the ensuing year was appointed. (See page 3)

Under General Business, comment and discussion took place regarding potential activities and concerns with specific occupational health issues which could be addressed during 2016.

Safety First. Safety Foremost awards

Also at the Annual General Meeting, the *Safety First, Safety Foremost Awards* for excellence in health and safety management skills of students undertaking the Bachelor of Science (Health) at Curtin University were presented to the first and third place awardees.

The second place awardee (Samantha Houghton) was interstate and unable to attend.

The awards were presented by Peter Nicholls on behalf of sponsor FMR Investments.

Above pic: L-R, Safety First, Safety Foremost awardees Ashleigh Rowland and Courtney Haua, with Peter Nicholls, representing FMR Investments.



WELCOME

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Archived editions of the Monitor are available online at www.marcsta.com

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Legislative/regulatory matters

OHSA(WA) Committee

The following persons were elected for the ensuing year or appointed subsequently:

Chairperson	Joe Maglizza
Vice-Chair	Allaine Coleman
Secretary	Patrick Gilroy
Treasurer	Dave Lampard

Committee:
(including co-opted members):

Debbie Gaskin
Ross Graham
Dr Janis Jansz
Sheryl Kelly
Peter Nicholls
Dr Nic Ormonde
Geoff Taylor
Les Vogiatzakis

Student representatives:

Bronte Weekes
Said Abdilahi
Deepak Manu

Recent submissions by the OHSA(WA)

Department of Mines and Petroleum – Draft Guideline on Working in Remote or Isolated Areas

The Society expressed concern about the inadequate coverage given to 'health related' issues 'vis-à-vis' 'safety' issues in the draft document and suggested amendments.

SafeWork Australia – Discussion Paper: The Role of Chemical Exposure Standards in Work Health and Safety Laws

The Society expressed the view that Exposure Standards should be:

- health-based rather than pragmatic (which allows them to be manipulated).
- non-mandatory so that they can be regularly updated without the need for Regulatory Impact Statements which can be costly and result in extended delays.
- aligned to the European Occupational Exposure Limits which are regularly updated.

Lack of support in Europe for British demand to remove regulation in the field of employment rights and safety

The TUC head of safety, Hugh Robertson, says that the British demand for a Europe-wide 'target to cut the total burden of business' could not only be wrong but also seems unachievable.

Nineteen of the EU member states who support some deregulation have gone on record to say that they will oppose any attempt to remove any regulation in the field of employment rights and safety. Mr Robertson notes that it is particularly significant and ironic that a number of countries refused for the reason that setting targets for a reduction of regulation would diminish national parliaments' right to regulate.

Robertson points to evidence that the cost of European regulation is massively outweighed by the benefits.

Source: TUC Risks #704, 16 January 2016

Workers' health not being protected by the HSE

According to an editorial in the *British Medical Journal* in November, workers in Great Britain are not being protected from occupational diseases and deaths, and the official health and safety regulator shares the blame.

Occupational physician, Anne Raynel, a former HSE Chief Medical Officer, said despite HSE's estimate of around 500,000 new work-related illnesses every year, and over 13,000 deaths, probably fewer than 15% of workers in Britain have access to adequate occupational health services. She predicted that "occupational medicine is unlikely to survive as a specialty because of a lack of enforcement of the employers' duty of care not to harm the health of their workers by the Health and Safety Executive, whose legally mandated medical division is a fraction of its former size, now with just two doctors covering the entire workforce in Great Britain."

Source: *Risks* #729, 21 November 2015

WorkSafe Vic under the microscope again

The Victorian Government has appointed three distinguished persons to conduct a further review of WorkSafe Victoria, to identify opportunities to examine, review and make recommendations in relation to:

- the relevance, appropriateness and effectiveness of WorkSafe's Compliance and Enforcement Policy and activities;
- the alignment of WorkSafe's Compliance and Enforcement Policy with the National Compliance and Enforcement Policy;
- the effectiveness of WorkSafe Victoria in discharging its functions in relation to providing OHS compliance information and promoting OHS awareness, education and training.

The review panel is to report to the Minister by the end of 2016.

The review panel comprises the following:

- Claire Noone, former Executive Director Consumer Affairs Victoria
- Margaret Donnan, former Director Major Hazards Division, WorkCover Victoria
- Cathy Butcher, OHS Co-ordinator, Trades Hall Council

SAFETY

How effective is OHS regulatory enforcement?

A systematic international literature review of the effectiveness of international OHS regulatory enforcement has concluded that:

General deterrence – that is, the potential to be inspected, cited and fined – is less effective in reducing injuries than the specific deterrence effect of an actual inspection.

Citations and penalties, which are examples of specific deterrence, do have an impact.

This suggests that, for regulation to be effective, regulators need to be "in the field" undertaking investigations and actively seeking out cases of non-compliance for regulation to be effective.

The systematic review of the international scientific literature conducted by the Toronto-based Institute for Work and Health confirmed the key findings of a 2007 review.

The full report is available from www.iwh.on.ca



IWH Institute for Work & Health | Research Excellence Advancing Employee Health | 1990-2015: Celebrating 25 years of research on preventing work injury and disability

A Systematic Literature Review of the Effectiveness of OHS Regulatory Enforcement: A Review of the Quantitative Literature

Emile Tompa, Christina Kalcevich, Mike Foley, Chris McLeod, Sheilah Hogg-Johnson, Ellen MacEachen, Kim Cullen, Emma Irvin, Quenby Mahood

IWH Plenary
May 5, 2015

SAFETY



Safety Performance of the WA Mining Industry 2014-15

The Department of Mines and Petroleum has published its Accident and Injury Statistics for 2014/15 which shows that the industry continues to perform at a world leadership level in most measures.

The report is a very useful study document for occupational health and safety professionals.

Mine workers' compensation rate trends are provided with a token table comparing mining sectoral premiums with selected other industries, which does not do full justice to the all-industry performance.

When the average premium rate for the 17 industry sectors is analysed, the mining industry rate is lower than all major industry sectors.

	<u>Industry</u>	<u>Premium Rate</u>
1.	Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing	4.28
2.	Construction	2.68
3.	Personal and Other Services	2.47
4.	Manufacturing	2.44
5.	Transport and Storage	1.94
6.	Accommodation, Cafes, Restaurants	1.85
7.	Wholesale Trade	1.63
8.	Health and Community Services	1.58
9.	Retail Trade	1.53
10.	Mining	1.48

Source: Safety Performance of the WA Mining Industry 2014-15, Department of Mines and Petroleum

Manager gets jail time after work deaths

For the first time since legislation was passed in 2004 in Canada to impose criminal liability on organisations and individuals that don't take reasonable steps to prevent employees from being injured or killed on the job, a construction manager has been sentenced to three and a half years jail.

Four workers died and another was critically injured after falling 13 storeys from a scaffold outside a Toronto apartment building. (see picture above)

The company concerned, Metron Construction, had been ordered to pay a CAN\$750,000 fine in 2012 pleading guilty to criminal negligence causing death – the highest fine on record in Canada for criminal liability.

Ontario Federation of Labour president, Chris Buckley said "Justice has been served. It sends a strong message, and employers should have shivers up their spines today."

Source: Risks 735, 23 January 2016

Construction industry skills certificates fraudulently obtained

In the UK, site unions have welcomed a decision to cancel thousands of site safety qualifications following a BBC investigation that revealed widespread organised cheating by centres offering guaranteed Construction Skills Certification Scheme cards for cash payments.

The union said that while many of the 6,000 cardholders concerned will be innocent parties, the risk to health and safety on site from those who fraudulently obtained cards has to be eliminated.

Source: TUC Risks #728, 14 November 2015

New chair for Safe Work Australia

The Federal Minister for Employment, Michaelia Cash, has appointed Ms Diane Smith-Gander to the role of Chairperson of Safe Work Australia for a period of three years.

Ms Smith-Gander has occupied a number of senior positions in private enterprise and has been an advocate for improving and promoting health and safety in recent years.

Source: Safe Work Australia Release, 10 February 2016

It is hoped that in her Chairperson capacity she will take every opportunity to restore the status of Safe Work Australia which has diminished significantly in recent times.

Fines for safety breaches reaching astronomical levels in the UK

- In the UK, a civil engineering giant has been fined £1m after the death of a worker killed when he was struck by the arm of a crane.
- One of the UK's largest gas distributors has been fined £1m after a worker became trapped in a ruptured gas main breaking his femur.
- A port operator has been fined £1.8m after a terminal worker was seriously injured when his arm became wrapped around a powered capstan while mooring an ocean-going vessel.

Source: Risks #736, 30 January 2016

The high cost of failing to maintain a safe workplace

In the UK, following the electrocution of an employee whose ladder touched an overhead power cable, which should have been buried to make the site safe, two men have been sentenced to four years in prison after being found guilty of manslaughter. Another employee was found guilty of a criminal safety offence and sentenced to nine months, suspended for two years. The company concerned was found guilty of two criminal safety offences and will be sentenced later.

The Detective Inspector who worked with the HSE on the case said "This case serves to highlight the importance of health and safety matters to all those concerned in construction and the tragic consequences that can occur unless appropriate precautions are taken."

Both employees imprisoned were also fined £10,000 in costs.

Source: TUC Risks #735, 24 October 2015

Construction union exposes hidden migrant-site death toll

In the UK, the Health and Safety Executive is being urged to address and record the nationality of workers who suffer a fatal accident following a construction union investigation of the deaths of five migrant workers in the construction sector.

The union said that it was essential that issues such as different safety standards and methods of working, language issues and the experience and training of workers were properly considered in order to prevent future fatalities.

The union said that "a proper safety course with a thorough assessment of a workers' understanding of safety must be the minimum requirement before they go on site."

Source: Risks 736, 30 January 2016

Incidence of mental stress in Australia's workplaces a cause for concern?

A comparison between rates of serious injury claims by mechanism of injury or disease between the 2016 Liberty Mutual Workplace Safety Index (USA) and the figures published by SafeWork Australia in its Statistics 2015 (covering the 2012-2013 period) show similarities in the major causative factors with some notable differences.

Similarities	USA	Australia
Overexertion (various causes)	29.2%	38.9%
Falls on the same level	16.4%	14.0%
Falls to lower level	8.7%	6.0%
Incidents involving land vehicles	4.8%	2.3%

Disparities	USA	Australia
Repetitive actions	2.5%	
Mental stress		5.0%
Being assaulted by person/s		2.1%

Although repetitive strain injuries do not seem to be a concern in Australia at this time, the rise of mental stress to the fourth highest mechanism of injury or disease is a cause for concern as that figure seems likely to have increased further in the past two years.



AIR POLLUTION

Office air quality effect on cognitive performance

According to Harvard researchers, the air quality in the modern office may be impairing cognitive function.

Traditional offices are built for efficiency, saving owners and tenants money by keeping temperatures stable. The downside is that they aren't great at circulating fresh air, which raises both the levels of CO₂ and volatile organic compounds (VOCs) in the air. VOCs are part of what contribute to that "office smell" – toner cartridge, paint, carpets and even adhesives.

In a study conducted at a high-tech laboratory, employees would work for a day and complete a test of cognitive skills at the end of their shifts. Researchers were able to vary CO₂ and VOC levels via diffusers hidden in the floor. Neither the test subjects nor the technicians administering the tests knew what the air quality was on a given day, as the gases and compounds were odourless.

To the surprise of no-one, the subjects' cognitive skills were highest when they were exposed to the lowest amounts of CO₂ and VOCs with good ventilation, the kind of air you would expect to find in the greenest of green buildings. The lowest scores came in the conventional office environment, where ventilation was low and CO₂ and VOCs were high.

Scores in the highest air quality were twice those of the conventional environment, but even scores in a sample "green" environment were 61% higher than the regular office.

The researchers believe that all three factors – ventilation, CO₂ and VOCs – play a role in cognitive function.

The next step for researchers is to examine the long term health issues stemming from working in poor quality air.

Source: AirQualityNews

Work health and safety requirements for inorganic lead undergoing overdue change

The WA Department of Commerce has responded to Safe Work Australia's proposed amendments to the health and safety requirements for inorganic lead with a document providing some statistics on lead levels in blood in Western Australia 1994-2015.

Though the document provides some useful data inclusions and limitations, it reveals that there is no register of workplaces where lead risk could exist and consequently that health surveillance of employees is unlikely to be carried out at an unknown number of locations.

However, effective controls such as eliminating lead from some products and the installation of extractive ventilation has been implemented at **some workplaces.**

The conclusion of Safe Work Australia's Regulation Impact Statement that "current standards are outdated and may not provide adequate protection for the majority of workers and especially females of reproductive capacity" appears to be thoroughly vindicated by the Department of Commerce's Statistical Report.

The Occupational Health Society of Australia (WA) has responded to Safe Work Australia's proposed changes which will bring Australia into line with comparable international standards and provide much needed protection for affected persons.

The Society's response can be seen at <http://www.marcsta.com/oh-society/current-activity/default.aspx>

Pregnant women and parents misled about dangers of living with lead pollution

Parents in three Australian states are being given misleading information about the dangers of lead exposure for babies and small children – including failing to warn pregnant women about the risk of miscarriage.

Research published in Environmental Health found that official online educational materials aimed at people in Broken Hill, Mt Isa and Port Pirie understate the health risks of lead for foetuses, babies and children.

All three cities are home to an active lead mine or smelter.

Lead exposure puts children at risk of significant health effects including developmental learning and behavioural problems. A recent study found that children living closest to the Broken Hill Mine had lower school test scores and were more likely to be diagnosed with developmental disabilities.

Source: *The Conversation*, 12 January 2016



2014 signage at Zinc Lakes (Broken Hill) urges children to wash their hands after play

Air pollution stunting the lungs of children

High levels of air pollution are stunting the growth of children's lungs. Eight and nine year olds living in cities with high levels of fumes from diesel cars have up to 10% less lung capacity.

Over six years, researchers examined the lung function of 2,400 children at 25 schools across East London and found a direct correlation between air pollutant exposure and reduced lung growth. Such children have an increased risk of disease such as asthma and bronchitis and the prospect of a permanent reduction in lung capacity.

The study was designed to assess the impact of London's low emission zone which, since 2008, has discouraged larger diesel vehicles entering the capital. The research found the measure had made no difference.

Earlier this year research suggested that air pollution could increase the risk of brain damage and small strokes which are linked to dementia.

Source: *Chemwatch*, 23 November 2015



Occupational textile dust exposure linked to rheumatoid arthritis

Occupational exposure to textile dust is associated with a more than doubling in the risk of developing rheumatoid arthritis according to research published online in the *Annals of the Rheumatic Diseases*.

It is also linked to a heightened risk of developing antibodies to rheumatoid arthritis.

Researchers based their findings on 910 Malaysian women who had been diagnosed with early stage rheumatoid arthritis and 910 women of similar age, but free of the disease.

Those who had been exposed to textile dust were almost three times as likely to develop rheumatoid arthritis as those who had not worked in textiles.

The association between textile dust and the risk of rheumatoid arthritis might involve several potential disease mechanisms since the differing physio-chemical properties of airborne dust affect where it deposits in the respiratory tract, say the researchers.

They conclude that “from a public health perspective, the results imply that efforts should be considered to reduce the incidence of rheumatoid arthritis by reducing occupational exposure to textile dust.”

Source: *ScienceDaily*, 14 January 2016

Further evidence of a link between traffic pollution and type 2 diabetes

Traffic emissions are a major source of air pollution, especially particle matter - tiny solid or liquid particles in the air. A new German study has found that long term exposure to traffic-related air pollution is linked with type 2 diabetes. Furthermore, the study found that people living close to busy roads were at greater risk of developing the disease than those living further away.

Source: *Science for Environment Policy*, Issue 435, 12 November 2015

Queensland GP calls for air pollution checks in Queensland mining towns

Dr Ewen McPhee, an Emerald, Queensland General Practitioner, has expressed concern at the high level of respiratory illness and allergies in towns located near Queensland mines.

He commented that, as a doctor he sees people with asthma, allergic problems such as allergic rhinitis, runny nose, coughing, sneezing and also people with heart disease and chronic lung problems and it's not just bad luck.

He said “obviously the environment is something we don't always take into our calculations and the Queensland Government should expand its air monitoring network.”

The Queensland Environment Department advised that there were no plans to install more monitoring stations because results of current monitoring indicated that ambient air was generally within the current 24 hour average standard.

Central Highlands Mayor Peter McGuire disagrees, saying that “it's important to make sure that these things are monitored, that people do have an understanding of what the levels are so that they can make decisions about their own health, their family's health, their children's health.”



Source: *ABC net*, 27 January 2016

Pic: Dr Ewen McPhee, copyright ABC “We can't just blame people's lifestyle – I think that we neglect the impact of our environment significantly.”

HEALTH - PHYSICAL

Obesity still rising among US adults with women overtaking men

Obesity is still rising among American adults, despite more than a decade of public awareness campaigns and other efforts to get people to watch their weight, and women have now overtaken men in the obese category.

In a report of the US Center for Disease Control and Prevention the obesity rate for women has climbed to nearly 38% of adults, up from 32% about a decade earlier.

Experts said that they had no explanation for why the obesity rate appears to be rising.

The report also found a tipping of the scales toward women with the rate significantly higher for women, at 38% compared with 34% for men.

Source: Bioscience Technology, 12 November 2015

Being overweight doesn't automatically mean you are unhealthy

In recent years, body mass index, which is a ratio based on a formula combining weight and height, has effectively become a proxy for whether a person is considered healthy. In America, people with higher BMIs could soon have to pay higher health insurance premiums if a rule proposed by the Equal Opportunity Commission is adopted.

However, research published in February in the *International Journal of Obesity* has found that there are tens of millions of people who are overweight and obese and are perfectly healthy.

Using data from the most recent National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey, the study found that close to half of Americans who are considered 'overweight' by virtue of their BMIs (47.4%, or 3.4 million people) are healthy, as are 19.8 million who are considered 'obese'.

Co-author of the study, Jeffrey Hunger, says "this should be the final nail in the coffin for BMI." He recommends that people focus on eating a healthy diet and exercising regularly, rather than obsessing about their weight, and strongly opposes stigmatizing people who are overweight.

Source: Bioscience Technology, 4 February 2016



Hydraulic fracturing given the green light

The Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs considering the implication for Western Australia of hydraulic fracturing for unconventional gas has identified a low risk of negative impacts on environment, water resources and public health.

The Committee found that improved regulatory processes and compliance activities by the Department of Mines and Petroleum provided sufficient safeguards to manage the developing industry.

Mines and Petroleum Minister, Bill Marmion, said 'the bottom line is that we are committed to protecting public health, water supplies and the environment, along with farming, horticulture and tourism assets – in line with the community and landowners' values and expectations.'

One can only speculate as to whether the risks to occupational health of workers employed was a consideration given the use of hazardous chemicals, e.g. endocrine disruptors which have been identified as having significant health risks.

Source: Department of Mines and Petroleum, 18 November 2015

Chronic obstructive disease in construction workers

Workplace exposures to vapours, gases, dusts and fumes account for nearly one in five cases of chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) say researchers in a new study by Duke University and the Center for Construction Research and Training in the USA.

Duke University researchers investigated the work histories of 834 construction workers with COPD compared to 1,243 controls who did not.

Workplace exposures to an unhealthy combination of vapours, gases, dusts and fumes accounted for nearly one in five COPD cases. Many workers with COPD had never smoked a day in their lives; one third of these cases were attributed to workplace exposures.

The researchers concluded that occupational exposures remain a major cause of COPD in their own right and more needs to be done to protect workers by getting vapours, gases, dusts and fumes under control. They said the current regulatory framework directed at restricting individual exposures is inadequate.

Source: CPWR, August 2015

Food Standards Australia and New Zealand about-face on the use of nanoparticles in foods

New research shows evidence of widespread use of nano ingredients in popular food products despite the Food Standards regulator claiming there is no need to test for particles.

Australia's food watchdog has admitted that two controversial additives – recently detected in popular lollies, sauces and dressings – are being widely used.

For many years Australian and New Zealand watchdogs have claimed that they are unaware, and that there was little evidence, of manufactured nanoparticles in food because no company had applied for approval.

However, FSANZ's CEO, Steve McCutcheon said at a Senate estimates hearing that FSANZ had known for years that nanoparticles of approved food additives titanium dioxide and silica were in foods. He said a toxicology report commissioned a year ago was expected to be received soon.

Friends of the Earth representatives said that the FSANZ appeared to be inferring that because titanium dioxide and silica have been approved of as food additives, the nano forms are also safe, which contradicts the findings of regulators in Europe, which

make it clear that the safety of nanoparticles can't be inferred from bulk particles of the same chemicals.

The FSANZ had previously told Parliament it was not aware of nanomaterials being used in food. It said it had not conducted testing or surveyed food makers and importers to determine whether nanoparticles were in food.

This is another example of the gap between Australia and the rest of the world on health related standards.

Source: Chemwatch Bulletin, November 2015

UK HSE produces a guide to the key issues of occupational health provision

The UK HSE has published a guide to the key issues of occupational health provision titled "Occupational Health Risk Management in Construction".

For those OHS professionals considering what issues may need to be considered under the model legislation requirement to monitor the health of workers and to have in place a Work Health Plan, it is a very useful reference document with a handy appendix.

The document is available at <http://www.hse.gov.uk/aboutus/meetings/iacs/coniac/coniac-oh-guidance.pdf>

occupational health risk management in construction

A guide to the key issues of occupational health provision

Document prepared by:
Construction Industry Advisory Committee (CONIAC)
Health Risks Working Group



Black lung disease in Queensland's coal mining industry



Last December news broke that a number of Queensland coal miners had been diagnosed with black lung disease, marking a return of the affliction. These are the first new cases of the disease in a number of years although the potential had been recognised in 2010. It has also been revealed that regular health check x-rays were not being monitored with a back-log of some 80,000 to 100,000 "unread" x-rays.

The Queensland Government has advised that a review of the Coal Mine Workers' Health Scheme will determine if the current medical assessment regime is an effective method for the early detection of pneumoconiosis in coal mine workers and what changes may be required to achieve accurate detection of the disease.

The review will be conducted by a team of academic experts and specialists from the Monash University Centre for Occupational and Environmental Health in collaboration with the University of Illinois, USA.

It will be supported by an advisory reference group comprising representatives of mine workers, mine operators, medical professionals and regulators.

Pic: Mesothelioma sufferer Percy Verrall is on tablets but still coughs up blood, has trouble breathing and must use an asthma puffer. Copyright ABC News.

Readers will recall the decision of the WA Government to delete the regulations requiring Mine Workers' Health Surveillance from the Mine Safety and Inspection Act without justification or consultation with health experts, which was criticised by academic epidemiologists, the WA Cancer Council and the Occupational Health Society of Australia (WA). (See Monitor May 2013)

The return of black lung to the coal mining industry should send a message to politicians and regulators. It is that the monitoring of health of workers requirement in the Work Health and Safety (Resources) legislation currently undergoing development should include a resumption of the requirement for worker health certification. That is, on entry to the mining workforce and every five years.

The classification in 2012 of diesel emissions as a cause of cancer by the World Health Organization makes that action even more imperative.

Federal intervention

A Senate Select Committee has also been established to investigate how and why the disease has re-emerged. It will commence hearings in March.



HEALTH - PSYCHOLOGICAL

JAPANESE FIRMS MUST CHECK MENTAL HEALTH OF EMPLOYEES

Commencing December 2015, businesses in Japan will be obliged to offer their employees an annual test to check their level of mental stress amid an increase in workers suffering from mental disorders.

The Industrial Safety and Health Law was revised last year to oblige companies with more than 50 employees to offer annual 'stress checks' to employees, which means it will cover more than 20 million employees nationwide

The test in the form of a questionnaire will target employees at around 16,000 businesses nationwide.

"The purpose of the testing is to let workers know their own stress level and keep depression at bay, rather than fishing out those with mental disorders", said Takashi Amagasa, a psychiatrist and workplace stress expert of Tokyo's Yoyogi Hospital.

Doctors and nurses will be prohibited from telling employers the test result without the respondent's consent. They and workers in charge of the testing can face punishment for confidentiality violations.

The law will prohibit employers from treating employees negatively for not taking the test or for refusing to see a doctor, or firing or unreasonably transferring employees due to results of their interviews with doctors.

SLOW PROGRESS IN CANADA WITH ADDRESSING THE STIGMA AROUND MENTAL ILLNESS

The stigma around mental illness remains a huge barrier in improving mental health in the workplace in Canada, a problem with an estimated cost of CAN\$20 billion a year.

Mental health problems account for one in three workplace disability claims - within any given week 500,000 Canadians may miss work because of them.

Canada broke new ground in creating a national standard for workplaces wanting to deal with mental health issues in 2013, but the hard work of turning it into a useful tool has only just begun.

Canada Sportswear CEO Ralph Goldfinger knows the stigma well and attempts to address it among his own employees. "The best way to create fairness in the workplace is to be observant – you have to create an open door policy" he said.

Source: CBC News, Canada, 3 November 2015



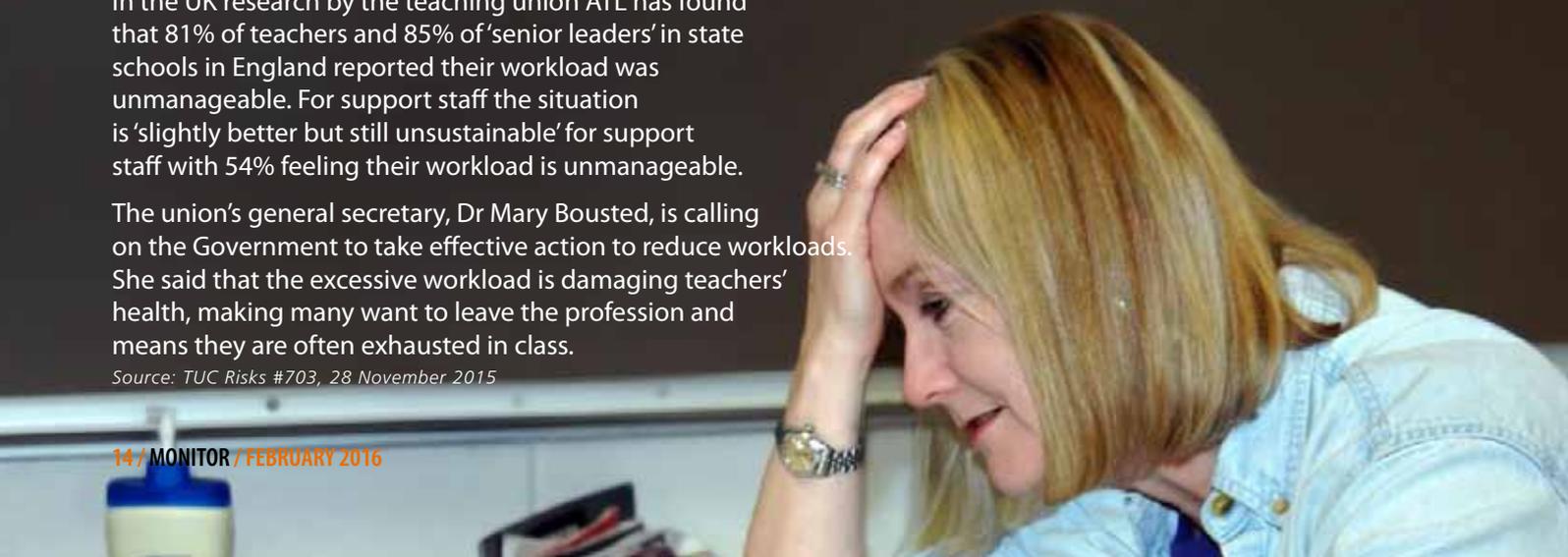
Pic: Canada Sportswear is a family business started by Charles Goldfinger (second from right) and involving brothers (from left) Lorie, Howie and Ralph, now CEO. The small company has great awareness of mental health because of personal experiences in the family. (Copyright Ralph Goldfinger)

UK teachers being ground down by big workloads

In the UK research by the teaching union ATL has found that 81% of teachers and 85% of 'senior leaders' in state schools in England reported their workload was unmanageable. For support staff the situation is 'slightly better but still unsustainable' for support staff with 54% feeling their workload is unmanageable.

The union's general secretary, Dr Mary Bousted, is calling on the Government to take effective action to reduce workloads. She said that the excessive workload is damaging teachers' health, making many want to leave the profession and means they are often exhausted in class.

Source: TUC Risks #703, 28 November 2015



Understanding 'anxiety' and recognising its symptoms

While understanding 'depression' has improved with most people recognising the symptoms and behaviour associated with it, 'anxiety disorder' is generally not recognised or understood.

National surveys show that Australians are unlikely to recognise the symptoms of anxiety.

Around 15% of Australians suffer from anxiety disorder in any given year, i.e.

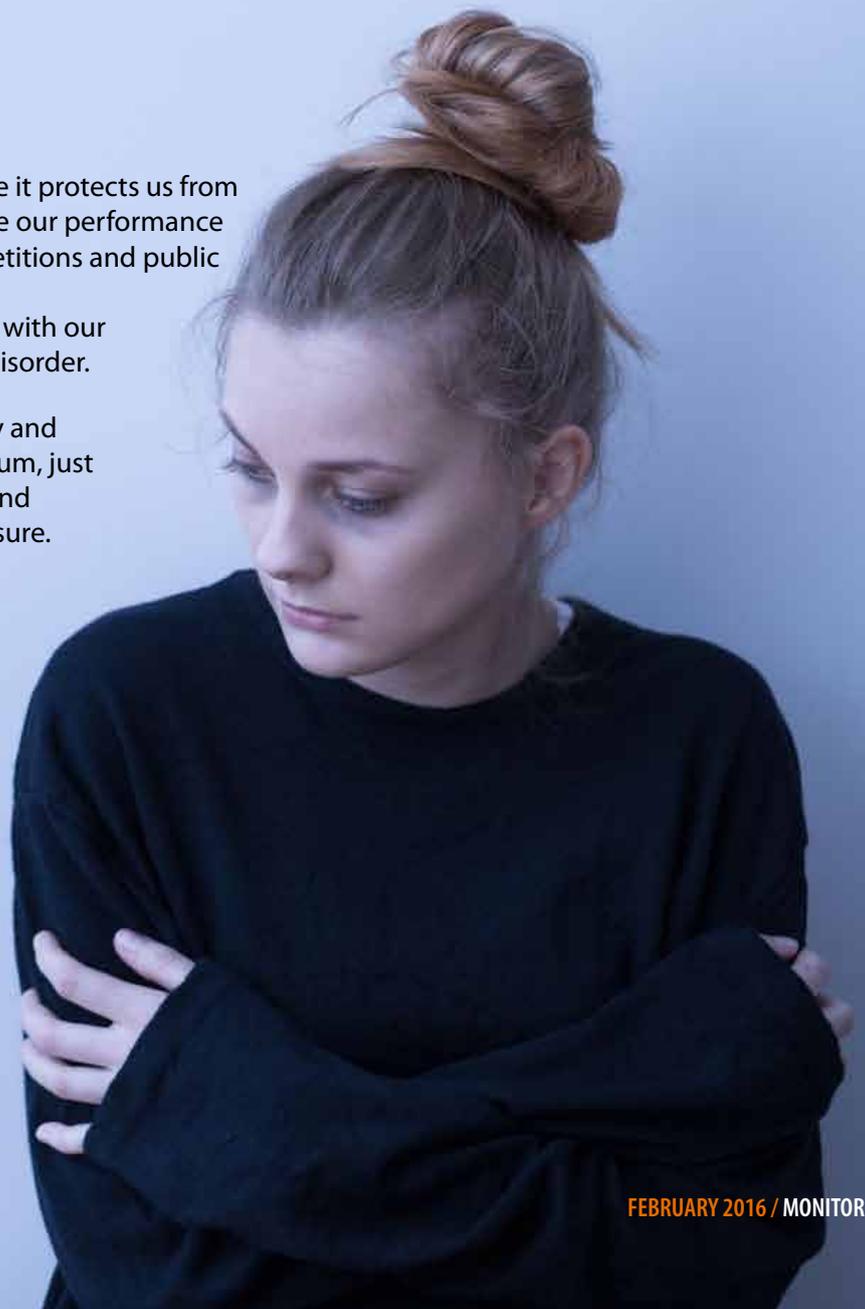
- generalised anxiety disorder
- post-traumatic stress disorder
- social phobia
- panic disorder
- obsessive-compulsive disorder

Anxiety is necessary for our survival because it protects us from danger, and can also motivate us to improve our performance in situations such as exams, sporting competitions and public speaking. However, when the anxiety is intense, lasting and interferes with our personal lives, then it becomes an anxiety disorder.

There is no clear boundary between anxiety and anxiety disorder, as they lie along a continuum, just like obesity is at the high end of body size and hypertension at the high end of blood pressure.

The best all-round approach is cognitive behaviour therapy. This involves working with a therapist to look for patterns of thinking and acting that are contributing to problems with anxiety. The person learns to use different approaches to thinking and acting that reduce anxiety and improve coping.

Source: The Conversation, 28 October 2015



New depression diagnosis and treatment

Major depression is now believed to be caused by abnormalities in immune cells of the brain. New research may be set to revolutionise next-generation psychiatric medication treatment, according to researchers at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

In a ground-breaking paper in the peer-reviewed journal *"Trends in Neurosciences"* researchers suggest that "progress in the understanding of the biology of depression has been slow, requiring expanding beyond the abnormalities in the functioning of neurons"

The contribution of other brain cells – often neglected by researchers – may be more relevant in causing depression.

Recent research at the Hebrew University and elsewhere finds that some forms of depression may result from malfunctioning brain cells, termed 'microglia'. The research could have a profound impact on the future development of anti-depressant medications. Present drugs do not always have the desired effects on patients, so there is an urgent need to discover novel biological mechanisms and drug targets for diagnosing the root causes of depression and treating depressed patients appropriately, says psychobiology Professor Raz Yirmiya, director of the Hebrew University's Laboratory for Psychoneuroimmunology and senior author of the journal's paper.

Studies in humans, using post-mortem brain tissues or special imaging techniques, as well as animal models, demonstrated that when the structure and function of microglia change, these cells can no longer regulate normal brain and behaviour processes, and this can lead to depression, he said.

Source: *ScienceDaily*, 22 October 2015

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Depression now the top reason for GP visits in Canada

Depression is now in line with high blood pressure as a top reason behind visits to doctors according to a 2015 Canadian survey of 1,223 respondents.

Sixty-three percent of physicians report mental health issues such as depression, anxiety disorders and stress represent the fastest increase in their recent patient cases.

Sources of workplace stress are most often related to emotional or interpersonal issues said 60% of respondents. Job-related issues are the source of workplace stress for 43% of respondents.

One-half of employers surveyed believe they have employees with mental health issues.

It is clear that a large number of managers are seeing behaviours such as lowered productivity, increased absences, anxious behavior or a dishevelled appearance that would lead them to this belief said Paula Allen, vice-president at Morneau Shepell.

Source: *HR Reporter*, 27 January 2016

Mental health costs and consequent productivity and prosperity losses

New data released by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) shows that Australians spent an estimated A\$8 billion on mental health related services in 2013-14.

The direct financial impact on Australian businesses is in the vicinity of \$11 billion every year, largely due to absenteeism (\$4.75 billion) and reduced productivity (\$6.1 billion) from unwell workers still attempting to work (presenteeism).

All this shows that mental health is more than a social issue. It should also be right at the top when we are thinking about which factors influence productivity and prosperity.

A 2014 PricewaterhouseCoopers' report suggests the average return on every dollar invested in improving mental health yields a \$2.30 return. It also compared the return on investments in mental health for small, medium and large organisations.

Source: *The Conversation*, 3 February 2016

Presenteeism and its causes

According to a study by researchers from the University of East Anglia (UK) and Concordia University (Canada) high job demands, stress and job insecurities are among the main reasons why people go to work when they are ill.

The results published in the *Journal of Occupational Psychology* indicate that one of the most significant causes of presenteeism is the severity of organisational policies used to monitor or reduce staff absence, such as strict trigger points for disciplining action, job insecurity, limited paid sick leave, or few absence days allowed without a medical certificate.

Lead author, Dr Mariella Miraglia, said "working while ill can compound the effects of the initial illness and result in negative job attitudes and withdrawal from work. However, the possible negative consequences of being absent can prompt employees to show up ill or return to work when not totally recovered. Organisations may want to carefully review attendance policies for features which could decrease absence at the cost of increased presenteeism."

Source: *Risks* 728, 14 November 2015

Light exposure linked to weight gain in children

A study by the Queensland University of Technology's Early Childhood Research Group has revealed that pre-schoolers exposed to more light earlier in the day tend to weigh more.

The research suggests that light exposure, artificial and natural, needs to be part of the conversation about the weight of children, along with calorie intake, decreased physical activity and sleep patterns, says Cassandra Pattinson, a PhD student.

Ms Pattinson says "we found moderate intensity light exposure earlier in the day was associated with increased body mass index (BMI) while children who received their biggest dose of light – outdoors and indoors – in the afternoon were slimmer.

Surprisingly, physical activity was not associated with the body mass of the children but sleep timing and light exposure was. This is the first time light has been shown to contribute to weight in children.

Ms Pattinson said that the next step was to figure out how the research can be used in the fight against obesity in children.

Source: *ScienceDaily*, 23 October 2015



The importance of adequate sleep quantity and quality to cardiovascular health

Poor sleep habits may put you at higher risk for early signs of heart disease when compared to those who get adequate, good quality sleep according to a study published by the American Heart Association.

Researchers studied more than 47,000 young and middle-aged adults who completed a sleep questionnaire and had advanced tests to detect early coronary artery lesions and measure arterial stiffness. Early coronary lesions were detected as the presence of calcium in the coronary arteries and arterial stiffness was assessed by measuring the velocity, or speed, of the pulse wave between the arteries in the upper arm or ankle.

Findings:

- Adults who sleep five or fewer hours a day have 50% more calcium in their coronary arteries than those who sleep seven hours a day.
- Those who sleep nine or more hours a day have more than 70% more coronary calcium compared to those who sleep seven hours.
- Adults who reported poor sleep quality had more than 20% more coronary calcium than those who reported good sleep quality.

The study's findings highlight the importance of adequate sleep quality and quantity to maintain cardiovascular health.

Source: *Medical Research Interview*, 12 September 2015

Our circadian clocks control insulin and blood sugar in pancreas

A Northwestern Medicine (USA) study has pinpointed thousands of genetic pathways an internal clock takes to dictate how and when our pancreas must produce insulin and control blood sugar, findings that could eventually lead to new therapies for children and adults with diabetes.

Principal investigator, Dr Joe Bass, chief of endocrinology at Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine says that "the study reinforces the idea that clocks operating in cells are fundamental to health. They represent an important untapped target for improving the function of cells in the pancreas."

The body's circadian clocks co-ordinate behaviours like eating and sleeping, as well as physiological activity like metabolism, with the Earth's 24-hour light-dark cycle.

There is a master clock in the brain, as well as peripheral clocks located in individual organs. When genetics, environment or behaviour disrupt the synchrony of these clocks, metabolic disorders can develop.

Source: *Bioscience Technology*, 9 November 2015

NOISE

Noise induced hearing loss of concern in the oil and gas industry

Data from a 2014 hearing loss prevention program conducted by WorkSafe BC in Canada shows that one-third of workers in the oil and gas industry overall showed signs of noise-related hearing loss.

WorkSafe BC regional prevention manager, Budd Phillips, said that this was a concern as the hearing test results in the oil and gas industry are more than double compared to other industries with hazardous noise levels.

He said “this is a call to action for employers in hazardous noise industries to ensure their workers have access to hearing loss prevention programs and annual testing, as well as vigilant monitoring to determine where and when the highest levels of noise exposure are occurring and take appropriate engineering control measures to reduce exposure.”

WorkSafe BC data also found hearing protection used in the oil and gas industry is in some cases insufficient and needs to be re-evaluated by employers.

It also indicated that 27% of young workers working in the oil and gas field servicing sub-sector, report that they do not wear hearing protection devices.

Source: Cos Mag, 1 February 2016



HAZARDOUS MATERIALS

Another step towards safer chemicals by 2020

The European Chemicals Agency (ECHA) has revamped its website to enable workers to access improved information on chemicals to which they are exposed to work. It has developed a new feature, Infocard, which enables users to view at a glance the key properties of more than 120,000 substances.

The Infocard gives a summary of the key information on a chemical substance. Users can read about the chemicals they are exposed to, where they are commonly used, whether they are hazardous and the precautions that they may need to take.

Executive Director of ECHA, Geert Dancet, says that "ECHA is moving from collecting information to making much better use of it for the general public as well as for regulators throughout the world."

Source: www.echa.europa.eu

Asbestos epidemic in the USA hits third wave

A devastating investigative feature and a heart-wrenching video have recently been released by the Center for Public Integrity.

Between them, they tell the tragic story of one Florida family whose lives have been irrevocably changed by asbestos. Thirty-nine year old Kris Penny is dying from a cancer (mesothelioma) contracted after exposure to asbestos while installing fibre-optic cable underground. He had no idea that asbestos was in the underground pipes that housed the cable.

The cable was housed in pipe made of asbestos cement.

The video can be viewed at <http://www.publicintegrity.org/2015/12/17/19026/upended-america-s-third-wave-asbestos-disease>

Source: *OHS Reps, SafetyNetJournal*, # 347, 23 December 2015



Pic: Kris Penny in April 2015 and in October 2015.

Italy asbestos trial gets underway

Seventeen ex-managers at the electronics firm, Olivetti, are on trial over allegations that asbestos exposure at a factory caused 14 deaths.

The group face charges of manslaughter over 14 confirmed asbestos-related deaths that have all occurred since 2005.

The prosecution team has amassed some 36,000 pages of evidence, which spans 50 years of the iconic brand's history and includes oral testimonies from employees working across a number of departments.

In July 2015, 11 former managers at the tyre manufacturer, Pirelli, were convicted of manslaughter after 24 workers died from asbestos related disease.

Source: TUC Risks #734, 16 January 2016



Asbestos exposure risk ignored by major hospital

Unions in the UK are calling for answers and actions after it was revealed that more than 20 workers have been exposed to asbestos for years in a Manchester hospital.

The union says that the Christie Hospital NHS Foundation Trust failed to deal with the cancer causing substance, putting staff, patients and visitors at risk. The Trust failed to inform employees about the presence of asbestos and did not put any control measures in place. It also failed to maintain an up-to-date asbestos register or monitor the condition of the asbestos on site along with other contraventions of the Control of Asbestos Regulation 2012.

The hospital has admitted it "historically may not have met the required health and safety standards."

Source: TUC Risks #735, 24 October 2015

Pic: Copyright Northern Insulation Contractors have been awarded the contract for a three year framework agreement to provide asbestos removal services to The Christie Hospital in Manchester.

Nail polish could mess with your hormones and reproductive system

A new study by researchers at Duke University and the Environmental Working Group has found that a common nail polish chemical and endocrine disruptor called TPHP is leaching into the bodies of polish wearers.

The authors suggest that the chemical causes changes in hormone regulation, metabolism and the reproductive system.

Johanna Congleton, a study co-author, said "it is very troubling that nail polish being marketed to women and teenage girls contains a suspected endocrine disruptor. It is even more troubling to learn that their bodies absorb the chemical relatively quickly after they apply a coat of polish."

Source: Chemwatch, 16 November 2015



WORKERS' COMPENSATION

Discrimination against sick workers attracts high penalties in the UK

A report compiled by the human resources magazine Personnel Today shows that substantial settlements can occur in cases of discrimination against sick workers.

- An employees' lack of support when he went off work sick as a result of work-related stress resulted in an award to the claimant of UK£257,127.
- An employee who was disciplined for, among other things, his refusal to consent to the release of a medical report was awarded UK£239,913 for disability discrimination.
- A deceased underground worker was awarded UK£223,869 for disability discrimination.
- An employee with chronic fatigue syndrome was able to show that the way in which a move to a new job and her subsequent absences were handled was discriminatory and was awarded UK£192,656.
- The National Health Service was found to have committed disability discrimination against an employee having cancer treatment who was required to undergo a competitive interview process during a redeployment exercise. The employee was awarded UK£115,056.

Source: TUC Risks #734, 16 January 2016

CANCERS

INHERITED GENETIC SUSCEPTIBILITY ACROSS 12 CANCER TYPES

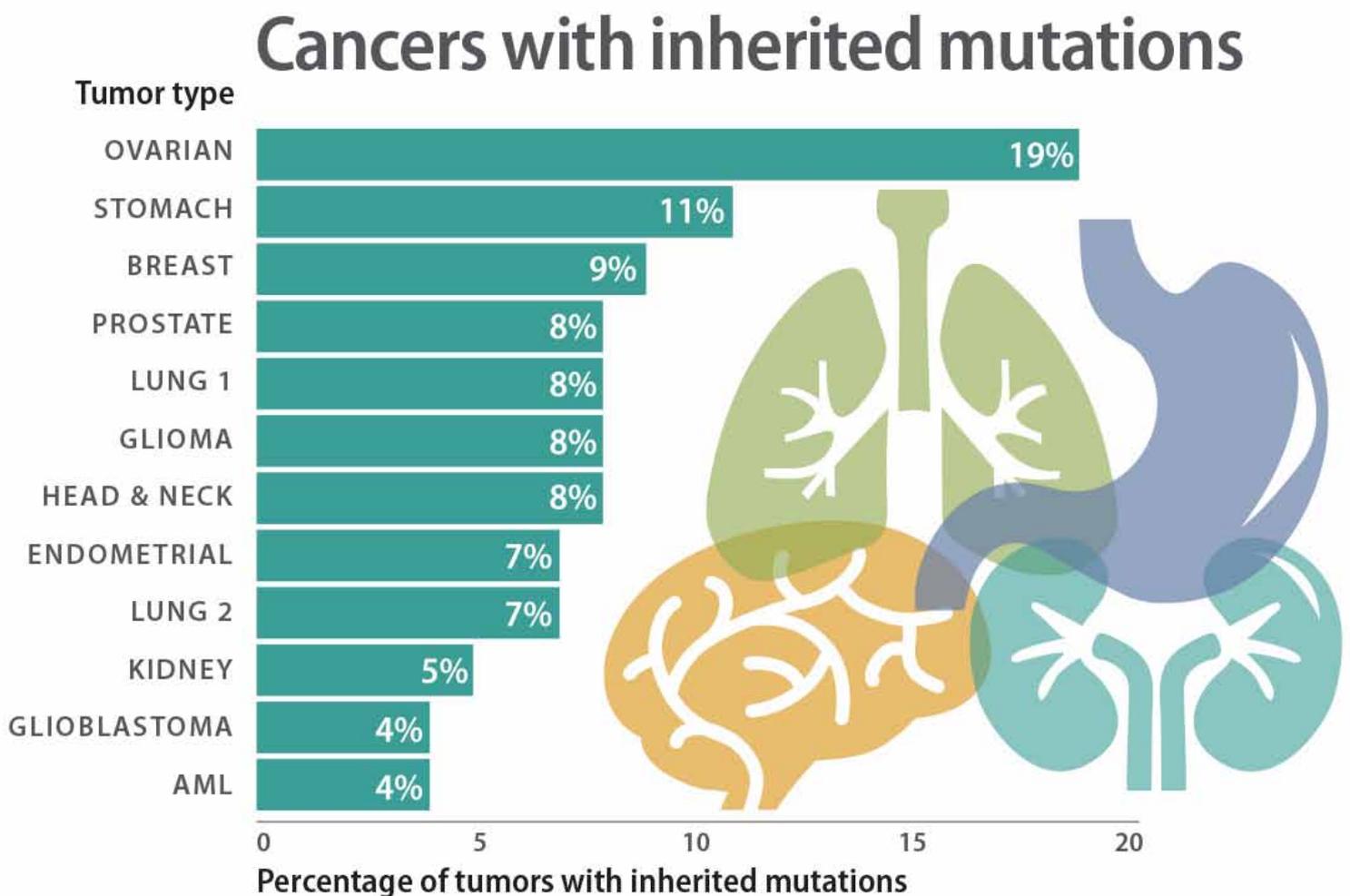
Researchers have shed light on inherited genetic elements across 12 cancer types – showing a surprising inherited component to stomach cancer and providing some needed clarity on the consequences of certain mutations in well-known breast cancer susceptibility genes BRCA1 and BRCA2.

In general, we have known that ovarian and breast cancers have a significant inherited component, and others, such as acute myeloid leukaemia (AML) and lung cancer, have a much smaller inherited genetic contribution, said senior author Li Ding.

But this is the first time on a large scale that we've been able to pinpoint gene culprits or even the actual mutations responsible for cancer susceptibility.

The new information has implications for improving the accuracy of existing genetic tests for cancer risk and eventually expanding the available tests to include a wider variety of tumours.

Source: *Bioscience Technology*, 4 January 2016



Pic: Copyright Sara Dickherber, Source *Bioscience Technology*, 4 January 2016

CANCER COUNCIL UV METERS

Cancer Council UV Meters are now available for purchase. The UV Meter is an important tool in outdoor workplaces to assist with fulfilling duty of care requirements of organisations and compliance with safety policies by workers. It also aids in developing a deeper understanding of UV radiation, and the impact on our health.

Western Australia has some of the highest rates of skin cancer in the world, and the effects of overexposure to UV accumulate in your skin, increasing your lifetime risk of skin cancer.

Research shows as many as 34% of Australian workers are exposed to direct UV during working hours and it is estimated that around 200 melanomas and 34,000 non melanoma skin cancers per year can be attributed to occupational exposure to UV radiation. Also, in Australia between 2000 and 2009 there were 1,360 workers' compensation claims for sun related injury and disease at a total cost of \$38.4 million, and this has seen an increase in recent years.

The meter provides information of when it is safe to be outside without sun protection, and when sun protection is required. As the display is constantly updating with the current UV level for the location, employees are more likely to take notice of the information than if just provided on a static sign.

The meters are solar powered and include sensors so they can provide an accurate real-time reading of the UV level for the location. The reading is also available online - ideal for tracking UV levels and scheduling activities.

For a limited time, the Cancer Council WA is offering the opportunity to businesses located in the Perth area to have a CCWA representative come and present information to those interested in purchasing a meter.

For a product guide and more information about the UV meters, please visit <http://www.myuv.com.au/public-real-time-uv-meter/>, or alternatively contact the Cancer Council WA at sunsmart@cancerwa.asn.au or call Cathy on 9388 4360.

Source: Cancer Council WA, 12 January 2016



Glyphosate's carcinogenic rating being challenged

A panel of scientists is disputing a WHO report published earlier this year that concluded glyphosate, the world's most widely used week killer produced by Monsanto, is probably carcinogenic to humans.

Critics say that industry-linked scientists are downplaying the risk to human health and trying to discredit the IARC report by casting doubt on some of the scientific studies that it reviewed.

Ten of the 16 scientists on the Intertek Scientific and Regulatory Consultancy panel have been consultants for Monsanto in the past and two others are former Monsanto employees.

Monsanto are paying for the panel's work.

Source: Chemwatch, 3 February 2016

Firefighters to be automatically compensated for all forms of cancer

In Canada, from 1 January 2016, firefighters and fire investigators - full-time, part-time and volunteers - will no longer have to prove their lung cancer is work-related to be eligible for workers' compensation.

(This policy does not apply to forest or wildland firefighters.)

Breast cancer, multiple myeloma and testicular cancer were added to the existing eight cancers in 2014 followed by prostate cancer in 2015. Skin cancer is to be added from 1 January 2017.

The 'presumption' legislation is retroactive to 1960, so it applies to claims by the families of firefighters who have died.

The union says it knows of 101 cases of lung cancer among firefighters in Ontario as well as 175 cases of prostate cancer and 68 cases of the other four forms of cancer.

Source: TUC Risks #734, 16 January 2016



MEMBERSHIP OF THE OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH SOCIETY OF AUSTRALIA (WA)

Membership Fees

At the first meeting of the incoming Committee of the Society on 26 February, the matter of annual subscriptions was considered at length. It was agreed that the current fees should be retained at \$50 for ordinary members and \$20 for students.

Subscription to the *Monitor*

The availability of the *Monitor* newsletter on a no-cost basis was also discussed and, while it was confirmed that the widest local, national and international audience should continue to have access to the publication (currently some 530 recipients), it was reasonable to expect recipients to become members of the Society.

Local members enjoy discounts at events organised by the Society.

Readers of the *Monitor* are therefore being encouraged to consider completing the Application for Membership which appears in every edition.

The *Monitor* is the only publication available at this time that provides readers with information on events and research being carried out worldwide, ensuring a wide and authoritative coverage of occupational health, hygiene, workers' compensation and safety.

The Committee feels that membership of the Society is warranted and the nominal fees assist in ensuring the continuation of the *Monitor*.



Advertising in the *Monitor*

The Committee have also agreed to allow advertising in the *Monitor* by organisations closely involved in the occupational health, hygiene, safety and workers' compensation disciplines.

Content of such advertising must meet acceptable quality standards.

Enquiries should be addressed to the Secretary at safety@marcsta.com



Occupational Health Society of Australia (WA)



Membership to the Society is open to all those interested in occupational health and safety.

\$50 ordinary membership

\$20 student membership.

Simply email safety@marcsta.com with your details.

Members - Ordinary

Matthew ATKINS
Anitha ARASU
Emma BARRETT
Joyce BLAIR, Next Health
Alan CLARKSON (Snr)
Allaine COLEMAN, CGU Workers' Compensation
Terry CONDIPODERO, GR Engineering Services
Dr Peter CONNAUGHTON
Maria DANIEL
Roslyn DAWSON, Northwest Aviation Services
Debbie GASKIN, DFES
Diana GEMMELL
Lynette GILBERT, QHSE Consultant, Tidehill Pty Ltd
Patrick GILROY AM, MARCSTA
Matthew GIPP, Cooke & Dowsett P/L
Ross GRAHAM
Anthony GREEN, Holcim
Dr Andrew HARPER
Emma HORSEFIELD, Jardine Lloyd Thompson
Dr Janis JANSZ, Curtin University
Kym KAPTEIN
Ralph KEEGAN, Frontline Safety and Training Services
Cheryl KELLY, Viento Group Limited
Sheryl KELLY
Dave LAMPARD, WA Police Union
Robert LOERMANS
Dr John LOW, Occumed Consulting
Joe MAGLIZZA, Holcim Australia Pty Ltd
Alison MARTINS, OH&S Consulting
Eoghan McKENNA, Logic Health
Peter McMAHON, Main Roads WA
Mike MORRIS, Liquid Limit Strategic Consulting
Rosalee MORRIS, Disability Services Commission

Peter NICHOLLS, FMR Investments
Dr Nicol ORMONDE, Ormonde Health Consulting
Terence PESTANA
Craig POWER, OH&S Consulting
Dr Karina POWERS, Ability OPN
Peter ROHAN, Department of Mines and Petroleum
Sherrilyn SHAW, Return to Work Solutions
Dr John SUTHERS, Occupational Physician
Prof Geoffrey TAYLOR, Curtin University
Dr Christine TEAGUE, Edith Cowan University
David TOMKINSON
Les VOGIATZAKIS, Matrix Composites and Engineering
Dr Kar Chan WAN, RediMed



Occupational Health Society of Australia (WA)

Members - Student

Said ABDILAH, Student, Curtin University
Muhammad AHMED, Student, Curtin University
Mamadou BAH, Student, Curtin University
Alayna CAMPBELL, Student, Curtin University
Natalie EVANS, Student, Curtin University
Alison KAZEMI, Student, Curtin University
Kevin LEE, Student, Curtin University
Jacqueline LUSENO, Student, Curtin University
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Claire PRATLEY, Student, Curtin University
Claire PRENDEVILLE, Student, Curtin University
Tim RICHARDS, Student, Curtin University
Izzie SHMUKLER, Student
Lauren STIRBINSKIS, Student, Curtin University
Merima SULEJMANI, Student, Curtin University
Bronte WEEKES, Student, Curtin University
Bee Kim Poly WONG, Student, Curtin University
Erandhi YATAWARA, Student, Curtin University

Incorporated in 1978, the Occupational Health Society of Australia (WA Branch) is a non-profit association which provides a forum for the wide range of disciplines engaged in the occupational health profession in Western Australia.

The aims of the Society are:

- to develop effective occupational health practice within WA
- to encourage awareness by individuals, organisations and other bodies, of the role of occupational health
- to provide a forum for professional contact between persons interested in, and working in, occupational health
- to express an independent, professional viewpoint on all aspects of occupational health considered desirable in the public interest
- to seek the improvement or an extension of the existing legislation for the promotion of safety and health at work in order to ensure uniform principles are applied in all occupational activities.

Visit www.ohswa.marcsta.com for more information.



Occupational Health Society of Australia (WA)

APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP

MEMBER INFORMATION

Title (Mr, Mrs, Ms, Dr etc)	
Firstname	
Surname	

PREFERRED MAILING DETAILS

Address			
Suburb		Postcode	
Home Phone			
Mobile			
E-Mail			

EMPLOYMENT INFORMATION – Only complete if you wish company to be recorded against your name

Company/Self Employed	
Work Phone	
E-Mail	

EDUCATIONAL/PROFESSIONAL DETAILS (if applicable)

Please attach your resume.

APPLICATION FOR: (an invoice will be issued)

- Student Membership \$20 General Membership \$50

AGREEMENT / SIGNATURE

I certify that the information provided in this application is correct and I agree to adhere to the constitution and code of ethics of the Association. I also give consent to the Society to collect, use and disclose my personal information in accordance with the National Privacy Principles in matters relating to the Society.

Signature _____ Date _____

POST OR EMAIL THIS APPLICATION TO THE ADDRESS BELOW: