
Towards a research agenda for mental health in the workplace
Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR)
Newsletter 3(4): 21st December 2006

UPDATE ON THE TASKFORCE ON IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CIHR RESEARCH AGENDA ON MENTAL HEALTH AND THE WORKPLACE

For its third cycle, with the mandate to foster a CIHR long-term research agenda for mental health and the workplace, the taskforce (now-called Implementation Committee of Partners), co-chaired by CIHR and stakeholder representatives Jean-Yves Savoie and Bill Wilkerson, has turned to partnership development as its major focus.

Recent activities since the last report in the June 2006 Newsletter have resulted in 1) the completion of the first Request for Application (RFA) for new emerging teams (you will find the results below); 2) a decision to undertake a gap analysis that will support second launch RFA; and 3) preparation for the 17-18 May 2007 second mental health and addiction in the workplace congress in Vancouver. Also, many papers presented at the first congress in Montreal in June 2005 have been assembled and peer reviewed and will soon be published in a thematic issue of the Canadian Journal of Community Mental Health.

RESULTS OF THE CIHR RFA FOR MENTAL HEALTH AND THE WORKPLACE EMERGING RESEARCH TEAMS.

CIHR has just completed its evaluation and one team will be funded. Congratulations to the team led by Alain Marchand from University of Montreal for their application entitled *Developing better diagnosis, interventions and policies in occupational mental health: A multi-disciplinary approach*.

Although the taskforce was disappointed that only one out of 15 applications was funded, there are some positive messages. Canada has some very good researchers, with very good ideas, that are starting to develop important relationships with workplace partners. However, the peer review committee felt that there needs to be stronger partnership between researchers and

workplace stakeholders, better synergy within the teams, and better understanding by researchers of the real priorities of employers. The research community needs some development. We intend to launch in the near future a call for applications for team development projects that will allow promising research teams and ideas to more fully develop and relationships with workplace partners to mature. With additional time and support from CIHR, we hope that promising teams from the last RFA and maybe others that did not submit may develop projects that fully integrate workplace partners.

A GAP ANALYSIS COMMISSIONED BY TASKFORCE'S INSURANCE PARTNERS

The work of the taskforce in engaging industry in developing the workplace mental health research initiative and establishing funding partnerships with CIHR has involved developing a better understanding of each other's perspectives, priorities and ways of proceeding. It has become clear that in order to develop a common understanding between the research and workplace communities, analysis describing the gap between what we know and what we need to know ("GAP Analysis"), written in language accessible to the corporate and business communities, would be necessary. This will complement the series of papers published in HealthCare Papers for the Spring 2004 workshop, which represent the gap analysis developed from an academic perspective.

The project is being led by the Global Business and Economic Roundtable on Addiction and Mental Health in the Workplace and Homewood Health Centre on behalf of the taskforce's workplace stakeholders. Funding from major insurance companies that are part of the taskforce will enable Wyatt Watson & Company to perform a global literature review of the most relevant and current research in the field of interventions in mental health as it impact workplaces. The report will include examples from Canadian work-

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places. The outcome of the project will have applicability for range of industries.

Our sincerest thanks to the funding partners of this GAP Analysis: Desjardins Financial Security, Great-West Life Assurance Co., Manulife, Sun Life and Standard Life.

The 5-month project has just started and results will be presented at the May 17-18 2007 second Canadian congress on research on mental health and addiction in the workplace in Vancouver.

IT IS NOW CONFIRMED THAT THIS CONGRESS WILL TAKE PLACE IN VANCOUVER MAY 17 AND 18, 2007.

The second Canadian congress will be hosted by the Center for Applied Research in Mental Health and Addiction (CARMHA), the Faculty of Health Sciences, Simon Fraser University and the BC Mental Health and Addiction Services (BCMHAS), an agency of the provincial health services authority which will also provide funding for the congress.

The purpose of the 2007 congress is to promote research initiatives and smart practices in the area of workplace mental health and addiction. The conference will emphasize the key themes areas identified by CIHR: prevention of workplace mental illness and promotion of workplace mental health; disability management and return to work ; diagnosis and treatment ; stigma/discrimination ; workplace mental health and addiction policies.

The program will include presentation of research in action, and the workplace perspective through papers, panel/roundtables, group discussions, workshops and posters.

Researchers, service providers, employers, unions and business representatives are invited to submit abstracts for oral presentations or posters session by January 15th, 2007. For more information, including the call for papers, please visit www.carmha.ca.

FORTHCOMING ISSUE OF THE CANADIAN JOURNAL OF COMMUNITY MENTAL HEALTH ON MENTAL HEALTH AND THE WORKPLACE

Special editors Carolyn Dewa, Bonnie Kirsh and Alain Lesage reviewed and assembled a broad collection of papers received from researchers, academics and workplace stakeholders, most of whom were in attendance in the first Canadian congress on mental health and the workplace research in Montreal in June 2005. It includes one paper from Dr Alain Marchand whose team is the first recipient of CIHR mental health in the workplace emerging team grant. The 18 papers in this special issue are arranged in four sections focusing on the amplitude and risk factors; stress and workplace mental health; working with people with severe mental illness; interventions or programs that affect risk factors in the workplace for common mental disorders and problems.

In their editorial, the guest editors opening remarks were « As mental health finally seems to be emerging from the shadows with the Kirby and Keon Commission (Canadian Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology, 2006; <http://www.parl.gc.ca/39/1/parlbus/commbus/senate/com-e/soci-e/rep-e/pdf/rep02may06high-e.pdf>), we must recognise that the awareness of the magnitude of the problem and its possible solutions come from various sectors of society ; nowhere is this more evident than in the workplace. When the CEO's of the largest banks and their Bay Street partners meet for half day to learn about mental health and the workplace and at the end of the session unanimously recognise the need for corporate leadership in addressing the issue, and when the editorialists from four national newspaper, whose political ideology covers the spectrum, also endorse that mental health represent one of the key Canadian societal challenge of the decade, we have surely the political and sociological signs that a cultural shift is taking place. Workplace mental health is no longer perceived as a marginalised and stigmatised group issue. It is recognised as a problem that can touch every-

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body. Mental illnesses are democratic illnesses, indiscriminately affecting CEOs, administrators, middle managers, union representatives, doctors, nurses, saw mills workers, etc.

Please watch the December issue of the Canadian Journal of Community Mental Health available in electronic way at <http://www.metapress.com/content/0713-3936/>.

THE CANADIAN PSYCHIATRIC ASSOCIATION RECOGNIZES BILL WILKERSON DURING THE SPECIAL ROUNDTABLE OF CRITICAL STAKEHOLDERS ON MENTAL HEALTH AND THE WORKPLACE IN TORONTO, NOVEMBER 9TH 2006.

An award was presented to Bill Wilkerson during this special roundtable hosted by the Canadian Psychiatric Association, the College of Family Physicians of Canada and the Global Business and Economic Roundtable on Mental Health and Addiction, a group of employers in action for improved workplace mental health. The roundtable included presentations by employers and insurers, about stigma and the workplace research agenda unfolding. It announced further critical stakeholders consultation, building a problem-solving dialogue on return to work issues.

Our colleague Bill Wilkerson was surprised by the award presented at the end of the meeting by the Canadian Psychiatric Association for his dedication and championship of mental health and the workplace in Canada. The prize was given by Canadian Psychiatric Association President Dr. Donald Milliken from Vancouver and president-elect Dr. Manon Charbonneau from Quebec.

THE QUEBEC PSYCHIATRISTS ASSOCIATION TAKES POSITION ON MENTAL HEALTH AND WORKPLACE.

At the end of its June 2006 40th annual congress on the theme of mental health and the workplace, the Quebec Psychiatric Association produced a declaration endorsed by its executive.

It starts by stating that the « L'Association des médecins psychiatres du Québec AMPQ ; Quebec Psychiatric Association) joins its voice with numerous sectors of society, including the business community, the insurance industry, occupational and health safety agencies, the national public health institutions, professional associations and government in calling upon society to focus greater attention on mental health and the workplace and to dedicate more resources to services and research on innovative solutions in this regard. We have learned from our patients that the sense of not having control over one's working condition is detrimental toward psychological wellbeing...

The AMPQ believes that psychiatrists have a role to play in collaboration with other professionals of the health care and social services sectors, with government, and with the private sector both insurance firm and company. The AMPQ also defends the rights of the severely mentally ill patients to regular employment and will work in conjunction with the groups concerned with discrimination against mentally ill persons in the workplace and elsewhere in society".