

Research matters

For more than 20 years WorkSafeBC's Research Services department has played a significant role in the workplace health and safety research landscape in BC. By fostering development of high-quality scientific knowledge on emerging issues, Research Services supports academic research and practical projects aimed at responding to pressing concerns. We can provide insights to those in the medical field regarding the care and treatment of workers who become injured or ill on the job.

Craig Martin, MD, manager of WorkSafeBC Clinical Services and chair of the Evidence-Based Practice Group, is part of the stakeholder committee that reviews research proposals and is an active research user. He asserts that all types of research are relevant, including lab-based studies, bedside and clinical endeavors, and workplace studies. Higher-level population-based health research is often helpful when looking ahead, and systematic reviews help WorkSafeBC understand what the world has to say, in a scientifically valid way, about important issues.

Funding opportunities

Through rigorous, peer-reviewed competitions, WorkSafeBC provides funding for research in a diversified program that includes:

- Systematic reviews and specific priorities research: Focus is on applied research projects on occupational health and safety questions that are aligned with WorkSafeBC's research priorities and have immediate relevance to workers and workplaces. The

studies give stakeholders insight on priority issues, provide critical assessment of current science, and identify and address knowledge gaps.

- Research training awards: Available to graduate students pursuing training in occupational health and safety, and workers' compensation research in BC. These awards are aimed at building a base of research expertise in the province.
- Innovation at work: Supports agile projects on a smaller scale and promotes collaboration between workplace parties and researchers. Recently funded studies include re-

finement of a skin substitute to treat pressure ulcers in patients with spinal cord injuries, an assessment of exhaled breath condensates as a marker of metal exposures, and an analysis of the handling of antineoplastic drugs to better understand how to prevent worker exposure.

Alex Scott, MD, associate professor in the Department of Physical Therapy at the University of British Columbia, has experience as a grant holder, supervisor of a research training award recipient, and peer reviewer. He notes that because the review process includes employer and worker representation, there is a real sense of responsibility to do research of the highest standard. As well, he points to the motivating factor of being faced with injured workers desperate to get back to their jobs and their lives. Dr Scott advises applicants to prepare well in advance of a deadline to build in enough time to seek feedback, generate support, and assemble a strong team with an excellent research track record as well as real-world experience.

Medical experts are encouraged to connect with Research Services and to participate in research by submitting proposals or partnering with other researchers.

Working together

Partnerships are an important component of the research WorkSafeBC supports. This is clear in the efforts of the Partnership for Work, Health, and Safety. Since 2005, UBC researchers have worked collaboratively with WorkSafeBC, using data gathered from multiple sources by Population Data BC, to paint a comprehensive picture of worker health. The partnership team is made up of an integrated group of UBC faculty, students, and staff along with advisors from WorkSafeBC.

Research Services also maintains partnerships with workers' compensation organizations and government groups from other jurisdictions, enabling WorkSafeBC to connect with a bigger pool of researchers and stakeholders.

Making connections

Medical experts are encouraged to connect with Research Services and to participate in research by submitting proposals or partnering with other researchers. Dr Scott recognizes that doing research can feel lonely and overwhelming at times, and that the most meaningful part of research is being part of a big community—a scientific movement seeking a better understanding of how to prevent and treat injury and disease.

Outlines, summaries, and full reports of active and completed projects are available online at www.worksafebc.com. To learn more about funding competitions, visit the website and click on Research Opportunities in the About Us section at the bottom of the homepage, or email resquery@worksafebc.com. ■

—Susan Dixon

Knowledge Transfer, WorkSafeBC Research Services

This article is the opinion of WorkSafeBC and has not been peer reviewed by the BCMJ Editorial Board.