

Preventing Mental Injury

Knowledge Activism

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Ontario Nurses' Association
www.ona.org

Our Reality



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Why the Concern

- 1 in 20 employees are depressed at any given time (CAMH, 2012).
- Absenteeism (including due to burnout) in Canada is estimated to be 17% of the wage bill (Brun & Martel, 2005).
- Over 83% of survey participants in 87 Canadian firms reported mental/behavioural health as one of top three disabling long & short-term conditions.


Stats from the Mental Injury Toolkit - OCHOW



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What's The Danger?


Psychosocial hazards:
Workplace factors that have the potential to cause or contribute to psychological or physical harm if not adequately controlled.

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Psychosocial Hazards


What are psychosocial hazards in your workplace?

- Demands, e.g. work pace, quantity, emotional demands.
- Work organization, e.g. having influence over work.
- Relationships, e.g. being treated fairly, role clarity, supervisor support.
- Work values, e.g. trust, justice and respect.
- Work/life balance, e.g. job satisfaction.
- Offensive behaviours, e.g. undesired sexual attention, violence, bullying, harassment.

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Sources of Unhealthy Stress

- Work organization.
- Social and economic conditions.
- Physical environment, including violence.

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Mental Injuries... What to do...

“True leadership is prevention.”

Honourable Romeo Dallaire
Ontario Minister of Labour Summit on Work-Related
Traumatic Mental Stress

March 5, 2015



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Why Prevent these Hazards

What are some compelling reasons for employers to act to prevent these hazards?

- Lowers costs
- Emerging legal reasons
- Corporate and moral responsibility

Thanks to OHCOW



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Prevention

	Individual	Organizational
Prevention Level	Primary • Coping and appraisal skills	Primary • Work organization, etc
	Secondary • Wellness, relaxation techniques	Secondary • Awareness, screening, surveys
	Tertiary • Therapy, counselling, medication, support	Tertiary • Employee Assistance Programs, Return to Work



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Example: Violence

Primary

- Risk assessments
- Staffing levels
- Flagging
- Layout of unit

Secondary


- GPS locating alarms
- Copenhagen Psychosocial (COPSOQ) survey

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Example: Violence – cont.

Tertiary


- PTSD presumptive legislation
- Chronic mental stress – Workers’ Comp
- EAP & health benefits

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Organizational Prevention

Pick a psychosocial hazard in your workplace and identify a prevention strategy for each level:

- Primary
- Secondary
- Tertiary

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How to Create the Change We Need

- Technical – legal
- Political Activists
- Knowledge Activists – most effective in creating the change needed

“Making a Difference: Knowledge Activism and Worker Representation in Joint OHS Committees,” Hall, Forrest, Sears, Carlan. Industrial Relations, 2006, Vol. 61, No 3



Knowledge Activism

Knowledge Activists Build the Case

- Actively and consciously collect and use scientific, legal and expertise-based knowledge to persuade and pressure employers to address not only traditional health and safety issues but also complex ones.
- These reps do not dismiss law, meetings, inspections and other technical aspects of the role—rather they use them strategically.
- These activists use social skills, links, alliances, information and any tools available to them as strategic choices and to their advantage in seeking their change.
- They bring solutions—and compromise.



Tools for Knowledge Activists

- European Union guidelines and practices – proactive inspections.
- CSA standard: “Psychological Health and Safety in the Workplace.”
- Ontario’s Mental Injuries Toolkit (MIT)
<http://www.ohcow.on.ca/MIT>
 - Copenhagen Psychosocial (COPSOQ) questionnaire
 - MIT app <http://www.ohcow.on.ca/MITApp>



Tools for Knowledge Activists – cont.

- Joint Health and Safety Committees
 - Knowing law, exercising rights, powers
 - Inspections, investigations
 - Written recommendations
 - Outside enforcement
- Collective agreement
 - Grievances
 - Negotiations
 - PRC process



Tools for Knowledge Activists – cont.

- Lobbying government
- Partnerships with Stakeholders
 - The Occupational Health Clinics for Ontario Workers
 - Public Services Health and Safety Association
- Media Campaigns



Knowledge Activism at ONA

- Violence through the lens of knowledge activism:
Leadership Table
- Minimum standard for security role/function and training requirements
 - Quality Improvement Plans
 - Health Care Sector Plan
 - Workplace Violence Investigations
- ONA violence campaign
- Workplace Violence Prevention – Report it



Knowledge Activism at ONA – cont.

- Joint Health and Safety committees
 - Knowing law, exercising rights, powers (e.g. inspections, recommendations) to control psychosocial hazards
- Working with employers to be leaders in violence prevention. Leveraging relationships, opportunities.
 - PRC process
 - H&S Appeals
 - Provision including paid education days in H&S and Professional Responsibility Complaint Process



When Injury Happens

Operational stress injuries must be treated as
“honourable injuries” *Romeo Dallaire, March 2015*



Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

- Ontario amendments to *Workplace Safety and Insurance Act* 2016 made access to compensation easier for “first responders” with PTSD.
- Nurses: included in *First Responders’ Day Act*, but not in presumptive legislation for compensation benefits for sufferers of PTSD.
- Update: ONA is gaining ground on our goal to have nurses covered.



Workers' Safety Insurance Act

In Ontario:

- ONA challenged the provision that allowed for mental injury only as a result of an acute reaction to a sudden or unanticipated event.
- ONA's Charter Challenge.
- Bill 127 – Schedule 33 amendment: Worker entitled to benefits for chronic mental stress arising out of worker's employment.



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Preventing Mental Injury

"True leadership is prevention." (Dallaire)

Through **knowledge activism**, union leaders need to ensure:

- Employers are putting in measures to ensure **prevention of mental injury** by controlling psychosocial hazards and making workplaces safe.
- Build the case for better legislation and enforcement.
- Seek help for the wounded.

Injury from **"Operational stress is an honourable injury"** (Dallaire)

**You have the right to be safe at work.
Your injuries are honourable. Expect fair treatment.**



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Preventing Mental Injury – Knowledge Activism



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