Reducing exposures to occupational carcinogens: Identifying priorities for workplace health and safety
Message from the Honourable Dr. Margaret MacDiarmid

I would like to extend my warmest greetings to all the participants in the Reducing Exposures to Occupational Carcinogens Workshop, and I send my regrets for not being able to join you today.

As a government, we maintain a very strong commitment to the safety of workers in B.C., and I'm proud to note that we've reported the lowest injury rates in our province's history the last few years. That's a great accomplishment – but of course, we can all do more.

As experts in occupational health and safety - from researchers, to industry, to government and community organizations - you are leaders who share one thing in common: The desire to reduce worksite exposures to carcinogens so employees go home safe at the end of the day.

This is the first time a workshop like this has been held in BC. Simply by being here today, you are demonstrating that investments in workplace health and safety are investments in people.

I hope today’s workshop gives you new insight into how you can identify priorities and provide suggestions for next steps to promote worksite health and safety, and reduce worksite exposures to carcinogens.

I commend the Canadian Cancer Society-University of British Columbia (CCS-UBC) Cancer Prevention Centre for putting together today's workshop. I hope you enjoy your day.

Sincerely,

Honourable Margaret MacDiarmid
Minister of Labour, Citizens' Services and Open Government
Workshop schedule

7:45 AM  Registration opens
7:45-9:00 AM  Breakfast  Belzberg Atrium

9:00-9:15 AM  Welcome

Speakers
Catherine Adair, MSW, Vice-President, Cancer Control, Canadian Cancer Society, BC and Yukon
Carolyn Gotay, PhD, Canadian Cancer Society Chair in Cancer Primary Prevention,
Professor, School of Population and Public Health, University of British Columbia

9:15-10:00 AM  The workplace awareness and knowledge study: Challenges, responsibility, and resolutions

Carolyn Gotay, PhD, Canadian Cancer Society Chair in Cancer Primary Prevention,
Professor, School of Population and Public Health, University of British Columbia

Under provincial, territorial, and federal health and safety legislation, workers in Canada have a “right to know” what hazardous materials they may be exposed to in the workplace and a “right to refuse” a job deemed unsafe. However, the extent to which workers are aware of these rights or able to apply them is not well known. The “Workplace awareness and knowledge study” (WAKS) was a pilot project that aimed to explore workers’ awareness of their risks of being exposed to harmful exposures at work and their knowledge of how to reduce these risks.

10:00-10:30 AM  From the field: Realities of workplace exposures and worker awareness

What actually happens on the work site? How do workers deal with workplace exposures? This session will put the “Workplace awareness and knowledge study” in context. Participants will share their experiences with workplace exposures and worker awareness. Participants will comment on the following questions: Which one of the study’s common themes resonates in your workplace? What are next steps to improve health and safety in your workplace?

Moderator
Mae Burrows, Environmental Health Educator, Director, Toxic Free Canada
A tale of two projects

Bob Barter, Recording Secretary, Executive Board, and Pension Trustee, International Association of Heat and Frost Insulators and Allied Workers, Local 118

In his presentation, Bob Barter will detail some of the current practices and techniques used in the marketplace with regard to health and safety, including recent unsafe practices on job sites. He will also review the training that is done through the apprenticeship program of the International Association of Heat and Frost Insulators and Allied Workers and how it relates to ongoing projects.

Aircraft worker's perspective

Nathan Shier, Plant Chairperson, Cascade Aerospace, Canadian Auto Workers Union, Local 114

Nathan Shier will speak briefly about his experience working in the aerospace industry. He will describe how workers deal with workplace exposures, and some of the challenges faced by those attempting to create a healthier workplace.

Health care worker's perspective

Cheryl Greenhalgh RTR, Medical Radiation Technologist, Heath Sciences Association

Cheryl Greenhalgh will speak briefly about her experience working in an acute care hospital from the perspective of a front line employee with no formal occupational health and safety training. She will describe some of the chemicals that staff members are exposed to, and comment on her experiences with staff education regarding these exposures.

10:30-10:50 AM  Nutrition break  Belzberg Atrium

10:50 AM-12:00 PM  Context setting: BC perspectives

What has happened in BC's workplace health and safety policy over the last thirty years? How do these changes affect the workplace? Panelists will set the stage from a variety of perspectives. Topics include a review of historical legislation in BC, the role of community education and advocacy in ensuring workplace health, the protection of workers from hazardous materials, the legislation of occupational disease regulation, and the results of a recent scan of workplace health prevention activities in BC.

Moderator
Larry Stoffman, Director, Occupational Health and Safety, United Food and Commercial Workers, Local 1518, Labour Consultant (Occupational Health and Chemicals Policy, Regulatory Affairs)
**Historical health and safety legislation in BC**

Lee Loftus, President, BC and Yukon Territory Building and Construction Trades Council

Lee Loftus will discuss historical health and safety legislation in BC over the past thirty years. He will consider the trajectory of workers' rights, and the progress made to ensure safety on the job site. Lee Loftus will bring considerable first-hand experience and insight into the recounting of BC's labour history.

**Looking outside the workplace: A public health new approach to cancer prevention**

Mae Burrows, Environmental Health Educator and Director, Toxic Free Canada

Traditionally, workplace rights and protections were thought to be achievable through education and knowledge alone. However, this view neither recognizes power relations in the workplace, nor takes into account the prevailing deregulatory regime. By being cordoned off in out-of-sight workplaces, worker health issues were not perceived as public health issues. This presentation acknowledges the importance of worker education and workplace research, but argues that neither of these activities by themselves will improve workplace health. To accomplish this, worker health advocates need to reach out to the larger community and build a multi-sectoral, diverse coalition of interest groups that can challenge prevailing power structures.

**Controlling worker exposure to asbestos and silica**

Geoffrey Clark, MSc, Senior Occupational Hygienist, WorkSafeBC

Construction workers are regularly exposed to many hazardous materials during the course of their work. This can cause life-threatening occupational diseases, including asbestosis, silicosis, and cancer. With a focus on prevention programs, resource materials, and recent regulatory changes, Geoffrey Clark will discuss how we can help protect workers from industry hazards, such as asbestos and silica dust.

**BC firefighter's occupational disease recognition**

Tim Baillie, Vice-President Emeritus, Retired, BC Professional Fire Fighters Association

This presentation will review the Firefighters' Occupational Disease Regulation in the Workers Compensation Act. Tim Baillie will look at the presumptions themselves, how they are structured, and why. He will then discuss the lobbying and strategy that was used to encourage changes in the Regulation, followed by the tools used, and recommendations for future efforts in this area.
Healthier environments inside workplaces and beyond:
Toxic use reduction activities in BC

Dorothy Wigmore, MS, Occupational health specialist, Worksafe (California)

Occupational and environmental health prevention activities include toxics use reduction (TUR). In 2009, TUR was the topic of an environmental scan in Canada, using a broad definition. The findings were a surprising number and wide range of activities. They included government laws and programs, academic research, union priorities, and non-governmental organizations’ campaigns. Gaps included language used, regional and sectoral differences, a focus on individual efforts, and missing voices. Opportunities included creative use of existing laws and programs, and a keen interest in reducing toxics. Findings from BC will be reviewed in the context of the national picture and recommendations.

12:00-1:20 PM  Networking lunch  ICBC Concourse

1:20-2:20 PM  CAREX Canada: The national “Occupational and environmental carcinogen surveillance project”

Anne-Marie Nicol, PhD, Executive Director, CAREX Canada, Assistant Professor, School of Population and Public Health, Faculty of Medicine, University of British Columbia

Anne-Marie Nicol will be giving an overview of CAREX Canada, a national project that is developing estimates of the number of Canadians exposed to known, probable, and possible carcinogens in workplace and community environments. These estimates will provide significant support for targeting exposure reduction strategies and cancer prevention programs. CAREX helps to identify regional differences and vulnerable populations, and is a significant new resource for policy-makers and researchers in the area of cancer prevention.

The Occupational Cancer Research Centre (OCRC) and the role of research in occupational cancer prevention

Paul Demers, PhD, Senior Scientist, Cancer Care Ontario and Director, Occupational Cancer Research Centre, Clinical Professor, School of Population and Public Health, Faculty of Medicine, University of British Columbia

The Occupational Cancer Research Centre was established in 2009 and is funded by the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board, Cancer Care Ontario, and the Canadian Cancer Society’s Ontario Division. Its prevention objectives are as follows: to conduct policy-relevant research to identify the causes of occupational disease and interventions to promote evidence-based decision making for prevention; to raise awareness among employers, unions, workers, and regulators to promote reduction of exposure or changes in process; and to raise awareness among health care providers and exposed workers to promote early recognition of occupational disease to promote better treatment, appropriate compensation, and provide an incentive for prevention.
Reducing exposures to occupational carcinogens

2:20-3:20 PM  **Reducing the use of carcinogens**

Kenneth Geiser, PhD, Professor, University of Massachusetts Lowell, and Co-Director, Lowell Center for Sustainable Production

The most fundamental approach to preventing exposures to carcinogens is reducing or eliminating the use of known cancer-causing agents. Well recognized carcinogens continue to be used in occupational settings and in commercial products. Experiences in Massachusetts and elsewhere demonstrate that the use of many of these substances can be reduced or substituted in those applications where exposures are high. However, substituting chemicals of high concern with alternative chemicals or processes needs to be carefully considered to ensure that new hazards to human health or the environment are not introduced at the point of use or elsewhere in the lifecycle.

3:20-3:40 PM  Nutrition break  Belzberg Atrium

3:40-3:55 PM  **Setting priorities for future action**

**Moderators**
Carolyn Gotay, PhD, Canadian Cancer Society Chair in Cancer Primary Prevention, Professor, School of Population and Public Health, Faculty of Medicine, University of British Columbia
Catherine Adair, MSW, Vice-President, Cancer Control, Canadian Cancer Society, BC and Yukon

How can we move toward better workplace health and safety in BC? This session will introduce some ideas to prevent workplace exposure to carcinogens, including the use of innovative technologies that deliver critical information at the point of exposure. This session will be open to the floor, and participants are encouraged to suggest their ideas. This brainstorming exercise will help prioritize future action in research and programs.

3:55-4:15 PM  **Next steps and wrap-up**

Carolyn Gotay, PhD, Canadian Cancer Society Chair in Cancer Primary Prevention, Professor, School of Population and Public Health, Faculty of Medicine, University of British Columbia

This session will review the day’s presentations and summarize future directions for research and programs in this field. The intended outcome of the workshop is to suggest next steps that will reduce occupational exposures to carcinogens.

4:15 PM  Adjourn
Reducing exposures to occupational carcinogens

Biographies

Keynote speakers

Paul Demers, PhD is the Director of the Occupational Cancer Research Centre, based at Cancer Care Ontario. He is also the Scientific Director of CAREX Canada, a national workplace and environmental carcinogen surveillance program. He is a Professor with the Dalla Lana School of Public Health at the University of Toronto and a Clinical Professor with the University of British Columbia. Paul Demers is an epidemiologist whose research focuses on occupational cancer. He has been a member of many expert panels for organizations such as the International Agency for Research on Cancer, the World Health Organization, the US National Toxicology Program, and the US Institute of Medicine.

Kenneth Geiser, PhD is an internationally recognized specialist on pollution prevention, clean production, green chemistry, and industrial chemicals policy. He is a distinguished University Professor and a Professor of Work Environment at the University of Massachusetts Lowell. He is also the Co-Director of the Lowell Center for Sustainable Production, a center that promotes sustainable solutions in chemical management and product design. Kenneth Geiser is one of the authors of the Massachusetts Toxics Use Reduction Act and served from 1990 to 2003 as the founding director of the Massachusetts Toxics Use Reduction Institute.

Carolyn Gotay, PhD is Professor and Canadian Cancer Society Chair in Cancer Primary Prevention at the University of British Columbia, and she also holds appointments at the BC Cancer Agency. A psychologist, Carolyn Gotay has a long career in cancer prevention and control research and leadership experience in community liaison and outreach. She has published more than 100 manuscripts and is currently funded by the Canadian Cancer Society Research Institute (CCSRI), the CIHR, and the Canadian Breast Cancer Foundation (CBCF). She presently chairs the CCSRI’s End 1 Development Committee, is a member of the CCSRI Advisory Council on Research, and is a member of the Quality of Life Committee for the CCSRI-supported Clinical Trials Group.

Anne-Marie Nicol, PhD is the Executive Director of CAREX Canada and an Assistant Professor in the School of Population and Public Health, Faculty of Medicine at the University of British Columbia. Her research areas include risk communication and knowledge translation, particularly in the area of environmental health. She has conducted a number of studies of how media coverage shapes public understanding of emerging environmental pathogens. Anne-Marie Nicol’s current research focuses on the challenges of translating complex exposure data to a range of audiences, such as the media, policy-makers, lay experts, and the public.

Speakers

Bob Barter has been in construction for over thirty years in commercial and industrial environments as a member of the International Association of Heat and Frost Insulators and Allied Workers. Presently, he serves Local 118 as Recording Secretary, Pension Trustee, and on the Executive Board. He also spent several years working in the asbestos abatement field as a technologist for two consulting firms. Bob Barter currently works from the shop floor with fellow members observing today's current business models in relation to health and safety.

Tim Baillie retired from Surrey Fire Services after 27 years of service as a Captain. He served the community as the Vice-President of the BC Professional Fire Fighters Association (BCPFF) for eight years, and with the United Way of the Lower Mainland Board for six years. He also served on the New Westminster and District Labour Council Executive, the BC Federation of Labour Executive, the Surrey Food Bank Board, the Newton Advocacy Group Society Board, and the BCPFF Burn Fund Board. He was also Ministerial Assistant to the BC Minister of Labour. Tim Baillie is father of sons Kyle and Reese, and partner of Karen Belcourt.
Mae Burrows is an environmental educator and advocate with extensive experience in prevent-cancer work by reducing occupational and environmental exposures. She started as an adult literacy instructor at Douglas College, and then worked with the Canadian Farmworkers Union to reduce exposure to toxic chemicals. She was environmental director of the United Fishermen and Allied Workers Union and helped eliminate toxins from fish-bearing streams. Burrows also helped unions identify toxins in their workplaces, and citizens gain the right to know about their exposures. She is a director of Toxic Free Canada and the Canadian Cancer Society. Last year, she received SFU’s Outstanding Alumni Award for Service to the Community for her steadfast bridge-building.

Geoffrey Clark, MSc is the Senior Occupational Hygienist at WorkSafeBC. He is a Certified Industrial Hygienist (CIH), a Registered Occupational Hygienist (ROH) and holds a master’s degree in biology from the University of British Columbia. Geoffrey Clark has conducted thousands of assessments in many areas of occupational hygiene, including asbestos and silica exposure, confined spaces, mould and bacterial contamination, and indoor air quality. He also spent six years acting as an expert witness in litigation cases in the US. One of his main areas of interest, at present, is reducing worker exposure to asbestos and silica.

Cheryl Greenhalgh, RTR has worked as a Medical Radiation Technologist (x-ray tech) in a busy acute care hospital for 25 years. In that time, she has worked with darkroom chemicals, cleaning chemicals, and more recently, chemotherapy drugs. In her work, she meets many young adults facing cancer and has come to believe strongly in the “precautionary principal”. As a parent, Cheryl Greenhalgh has become interested in reducing exposure to household chemicals and participated in the campaign to ban cosmetic pesticides in the City of New Westminster.

Lee Loftus is President of the BC and Yukon Building and Construction Trades Council, and is part of the Heat and Frost Insulators, Local 118. He has spearheaded a number of union campaigns to promote union health and safety. He also speaks out against poor quality insulation work that could lead to health problems and costly repairs for residents. Sometimes this costs the union dearly in terms of contract work and member support. However, Lee Loftus continues to act as a whistle-blower, because he feels it is the right thing to do.

In 2006, Nathan Shier was elected Plant Chairperson at Cascade Aerospace for the Canadian Auto Workers Union, Local 114. He believes the Union is only as strong as its people. He has been a vocal advocate for safety at his workplace, particularly around painting and paint stripping and other chemical use in the hangar. He continues to work in solidarity with his Union members and Union Health and Safety Committee to improve the lives of their workmates.

Dorothy Wigmore, MS is a long-time Canadian health and safety specialist. A former journalist, she earned an occupational hygiene degree in England. At the University of Massachusetts Lowell, she obtained a master’s degree in work environment, specializing in work organization and ergonomics. She also is a popular educator, researcher, and editor. Within this mix, she focuses on prevention and fixing hazards. That means integrating tools such as toxics use reduction and green chemistry with the best of ergonomics, healthy work organization, and real worker participation. Her goal: truly green jobs that are good for the environment and the people doing them.

Advisory Board Committee

Catherine Adair, MSW has a bachelor’s degree in Social Work from McGill University, a master’s degree in Social Work from the University of British Columbia, and a certificate of completion from the Program of Executive Development from UBC. She has worked in the social service and health services fields for 36 years with extensive experience in developing and managing community-based services in municipal, provincial, and non-profit organizations. Her current position is with the Canadian Cancer Society as Vice-President, Cancer Control. In this capacity, Catherine Adair is responsible for the three mission areas of the Canadian Cancer Society – Prevention, Research, and Support Services – as well as strategic planning, and policy evaluation.
Reducing exposures to occupational carcinogens

Joe Barrett is the researcher for the BC and Yukon Territory Building and Construction Trades Council, the umbrella group for 14 international construction unions. Construction unions represent their members as industry stakeholders in order to develop public policy and improve workplace safety legislation and regulations. Construction unions actively engage in public campaigns with the media and with politicians to raise awareness, to prevent exposures to toxic substances, and to fight for fair compensation for workers who have been injured or killed as a result of workplace accidents or contact with toxins.

Mae Burrows is an environmental educator and advocate with extensive experience in prevent-cancer work by reducing occupational and environmental exposures. She started as an adult literacy instructor at Douglas College, and then worked with the Canadian Farmworkers Union to reduce exposure to toxic chemicals. She was environmental director of the United Fishermen and Allied Workers Union and helped eliminate toxins from fish-bearing streams. Burrows also helped unions identify toxins in their workplaces, and citizens gain the right to know about their exposures. She is a director of Toxic Free Canada and the Canadian Cancer Society. Last year, she received SFU’s Outstanding Alumni Award for Service to the Community for her steadfast bridge-building.

Marliese Dawson is the Research Manager for the CCS-UBC Cancer Prevention Centre in the School of Population and Public Health at the University of British Columbia. She has over a decade of experience as a health projects manager, and she is responsible for the day-to-day management of the Breast Cancer Prevention & Risk Assessment Clinic. Some of her research interests include enhancing cancer prevention in the workplace by increasing the effectiveness in hazard communication, obesity surveillance, and cancer control, and using social media in cancer prevention. Marliese completed her undergraduate degree at UBC in Psychology, and has a certificate in Research Management.

Carolyn Gotay, PhD is Professor and Canadian Cancer Society Chair in Cancer Primary Prevention at the University of British Columbia, and she also holds appointments at the BC Cancer Agency. A psychologist, Carolyn Gotay has a long career in cancer prevention and control research and leadership experience in community liaison and outreach. She has published more than 100 manuscripts and is currently funded by the Canadian Cancer Society Research Institute (CCSRI), the CIHR, and the Canadian Breast Cancer Foundation (CBCF). She presently chairs the CCSRI's End 1 Development Committee, is a member of the CCSRI Advisory Council on Research, and is a member of the Quality of Life Committee for the CCSRI-supported Clinical Trials Group.

Sean Griffin is currently a board member of the health-environmental organization Toxic Free Canada, and was its research coordinator from 2000-2010. He is the author of the popular CancerSmart Consumer Guide. He also wrote Environmental Exposure, the CancerSmart guide to breast cancer prevention, which was produced with support from the Canadian Breast Cancer Foundation, BC and Yukon chapter. In addition, he delivers a course for the BC Federation of Labour Occupational Health and Safety Centre on chemical hazards in the workplace, which informs workers of their rights under occupational health regulations, and promotes elimination of carcinogens in the workplace.

Nina Hansen is the Director of Occupational Health and Safety with the British Columbia Federation of Labour. Prior to working at the Federation, she worked as a Health & Safety Representative and Workers’ Compensation Advocate for 12 years with the International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees (IATSE), Local 891 and Canadian Auto Workers Union (CAW), Local 3000.

Marty Lovick, RSW is the Senior Labour Relations Officer at the Health Sciences Association of BC (HSA), responsible for Occupational Health and Safety. He has a varied background in psychiatric social work, employee health and wellness, rehabilitation and return-to-work programming, and Workers Compensations appeals prior to assuming his advocacy role at HSA. Marty Lovick was a board member of the Occupational Health and Safety Agency for Healthcare. He currently sits on numerous industry committees and participates in many initiatives related to prevention of injury and illness. Exposure to carcinogens is at the forefront for many HSA members as well as other occupational exposures, since HSA represents professionals in many technologies where exposure protections are required.
Over the past 22 years, Colin Murray's career in risk management has spanned the manufacturing, financial, and public service sectors. Initially, he worked in the UK for a multinational corporation, covering 300 locations and 68,000 workers around the globe. In this capacity, he was responsible for managing all risks impacting the business, including health, safety, and environmental issues. He continued this work as a consultant in London before moving to Vancouver in 1996. Colin joined WorkSafeBC in 1998. He is currently the Senior Manager, Prevention and Occupational Disease Initiatives, which is made up of safety, hygiene, ergonomic, and audiology professionals.

Anne-Marie Nicol, PhD is the Executive Director of CAREX Canada and an Assistant Professor in the School of Population and Public Health, Facutly of Medicine at the University of British Columbia. Her research areas include risk communication and knowledge translation, particularly in the area of environmental health. She has conducted a number of studies of how media coverage shapes public understanding of emerging environmental pathogens. Anne-Marie Nicol’s current research focuses on the challenges of translating complex exposure data to a range of audiences, such as the media, policy-makers, lay experts, and the public.

Svetlana Ristovski-Slijepcevic, PhD is a Research Associate at the CCS-UBC Cancer Prevention Centre. Using primarily sociological approaches, she is currently working on projects that explore the following: how workers understand exposures to occupational carcinogens (e.g., the “Workplace awareness knowledge study” - WAKS); how interventions can reduce or eliminate high radon concentrations in BC homes; and how the science around issues related to cancer is represented in the media.

In 2006, Nathan Shier was elected Plant Chairperson at Cascade Aerospace for the Canadian Auto Workers Union, Local 114. He believes the Union is only as strong as its people. He has been a vocal advocate for safety at his workplace, particularly around painting and paint stripping and other chemical use in the hangar. He continues to work in solidarity with his Union members and Union Health and Safety Committee to improve the lives of their workmates.

Larry Stoffman has been a labour health and safety activist for over thirty years. He has had the privilege of representing workers on the provincial, national, and international level, focusing on worker rights, chemical exposures and right to know, and regulatory negotiations. He was a labour member of the BC Workers’ Compensation Board (WCB) Regulatory Advisory Committee, and has acted as the Canadian Labour Congress spokesperson in national and international chemical right to know negotiations. He served as Labour Governor on the Federal Hazardous Materials Review Commission and chaired the National Committee on Environmental and Occupational Exposures.

Kay Teschke, PhD is Professor in the School of Population and Public Health at the University of British Columbia. She is principal investigator of a program of research, “Cycling in cities,” on the effects of transportation infrastructure on choices to cycle and cycling injuries. Her other research focuses on exposure assessment for epidemiological studies and determinants of exposure modeling, including studies of cancer, Parkinson's disease, back injuries in heavy industry, and water quality and gastrointestinal illnesses. She received her academic training in environmental health at the University of California at Berkeley and the University of Washington in Seattle.

Cathy Walker is the former National Health and Safety Director of the Canadian Auto Workers Union (CAW), which was then the largest private sector union in Canada with 260,000 members. She was appointed to the position in 1992 and retired in 2006. Cathy has been a national union representative responsible for health, safety, and environment since 1975. Since retiring, she has worked with the Canadian Labour Congress, the BC Federation of Labour, the Vancouver and District Labour Council, the University of British Columbia, the University of Toronto, and the University of Technology in Sydney, Australia on various health and safety projects.
Reducing exposures to occupational carcinogens

Notes