

## **The role of knowledge transfer and exchange in a health and safety association-initiated collaborative partnership to implement participatory ergonomic programs.**

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Work-related musculoskeletal disorders are a major cause of workplace injury, disability and pain. Participatory approaches to ergonomics have been shown to be effective but have not been widely adopted. Certain factors can act as barriers to firms that have partnered with researchers to introduce a participatory ergonomic (PE) program into their organizations. One potential barrier is the time lag between data collection conducted by the researchers and feedback to workplace parties that wish to develop and implement changes.

The objective of this study is to describe the process of knowledge transfer among stakeholders in order to understand how data collected by researchers is used by the workplace's ergonomic change teams to implement effective ergonomic interventions. It is part of an ongoing 24-month study within the electrical and utilities industry using an innovative collaborative partnership. The partners include seven Ontario utility companies, the sector's health and safety association (the Electrical and Utilities Safety Association of Ontario – E&USA) and scientists from the Institute for Work and Health (IWH) and the Centre for Research Expertise in the Prevention of Musculoskeletal Disorders (CRE-MSD). Little research has been published on workplace interventions in this sector.

The stakeholder collaboration's objective is to leverage knowledge and resources to help overcome barriers to program implementation while building capacity and facilitating long-term sustainable participatory ergonomic (PE) interventions. To ensure rapid uptake and sustainability of interventions, results of the data collection must be provided to the utilities in a timely fashion. This promotes employee engagement in the research process while fostering a continuous feedback loop that the firms' ergonomic change teams (ECTs) can use to better target their risk assessments and ergonomic implementations. Easily accessible resources such as data summaries and reports, as well as ergonomic expertise and the creation of knowledge-sharing tools like templates, checklists and interactive web-based portals are used to help firms collaborate and to encourage industry-wide uptake of best practices.

This paper describes this process of information flow between the study's stakeholders with the ultimate aim of effecting lasting positive organizational change by increasing industry-wide adoption of best practices and reducing musculoskeletal injuries.