



ADVOCATE'S GATEWAY

Occupational Health Clinics for Ontario Workers Inc. (OHCOW), Sudbury, Ontario

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OCCUPATIONAL DISEASE INTAKE CLINIC HELD BY UNITED STEELWORKERS LOCAL 2251

On May 7th & 8th 2008, United Steelworkers (USW) Local 2251 held an Occupational Disease Intake Clinic. This clinic is regarded by many as a success and this is a reflection of the commitment from all of our excellent volunteers. In planning the clinic, it was essential to have the support of the Union Executive and in our unique situation this included the support of our sister Local 2724. The support of the membership is also required to approve the costs associated with the event.

Next we arranged meetings with individuals and organizations that had experience with this type of clinic, which included our United Steelworkers District 6 Health, Safety and Environment Coordinator (Nancy Hutchison), Occupational Health Clinics for Ontario Workers (OHCOW) - (Sudbury Clinic), the Occupational Disability Response Team (ODRT) of the Ontario Federation of Labour, Local 2251's Health & Safety Committee, and representatives from the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB)'s Occupational Disease and Survivor

Benefits Branch. While their input is invaluable, it is also necessary to customize your clinic in order to accommodate the needs of those you represent. There isn't a blanket template that will suit all clinics. However, with the support, expertise, and guidance of the aforementioned people and groups, you can hold a successful clinic. Many Unions volunteered to assist us at our clinic which was an inter-union co-operative venture that showed solidarity across Union boundaries.

Our plan was in place which included,

- an estimated number of clients that would attend
- body and hazard mapping to show disease trends in the workplace
- a work history station to identify exposures
- the location and date for the clinic
- solicitation of volunteers with the assistance of local organizations, the OFL, other union WSIB and Health & Safety Committee members (United Food and Commercial Workers Local 1000A, United Steelworkers Local 1005, United Steelworkers Local 9548,

OCCUPATIONAL DISEASE INTAKE CLINIC HELD BY UNITED STEELWORKERS LOCAL 2251— CONTINUED

Canadian Union of Public Employees, Ontario Public Service Employees Union, Building Trades, other Steelworker Locals, etc.), retirees, survivors, the local Member of Parliament (Tony Martin), and other friends of labour

- arranging a rate for accommodations for volunteers, providing training and information (assignments and job description) at a dinner meeting held at our Union Hall, supplying refreshments and meals at the clinic for the volunteers, a post clinic meal and social
- solicitation of donations and other assistance
- OHCOW's team attending and assisting and a post clinic plan.

The post clinic planning involved organizing the information collected at the clinic. To accomplish, this we pre-assigned individual numbers to every intake interview kit. We developed a database to store this information to allow us to search information by disease, department of employment, occupation, or job, to identify any trends and use this as supporting evidence. We also triaged the files with the assistance of OHCOW to prioritize and identify additional information required before filing claims with WSIB.

Our work continues as we approach the anniversary date of the clinic. We have approximately 860 active files which include less than 70 claims remaining to file generated from the May clinic. The interest generated from the May clinic resulted in 5 subsequent mini-clinics including one held in Wawa for our past USW members and/or families, and these numbers are included in the active files.

This information has given us the ability to challenge current WSIB legislation and policy in an effort to effect changes that will benefit all claimants. As a result of the May clinic, over 400 WSIB claims were filed, we've had 121 claims denied (the vast majority are being appealed) and 35 allowed. Benefits paid in these claims are in excess of \$1.6 million to individuals who likely would not have even applied. It is our hope that as other local unions hold occupational disease intake clinics that we can develop a database to provide scientific evidence for the cause of many industrial diseases and assist with the prevention of occupational illnesses.

Written by United Steelworkers Local 2251

THYROID CANCER CLUSTERS

In May 2008, an Occupational Disease Intake Clinic was conducted in Sault Ste Marie, Ontario for workers of Algoma Steel Inc. (now renamed Essar Steel Inc.). From that Intake Clinic, 13 thyroid cases were discovered. We are currently working on those files, trying to determine similarities in their workplace exposures, departments worked in, job descriptions and the proximity of their residence to the plant.

We are seeking your assistance and ask if you

would be willing to report on thyroid cases that you have encountered and include details such as the worker's occupation. It would also be appreciated if you would let us know if the client's case was won or not.

You can forward your response to
Sudbury@ohcow.on.ca

Thank you for your assistance.

MUSCULOSKELETAL DISORDER SURVEY

One of the greatest hurdles for Ergonomists and Professionals who work on compensation claims is establishing the work-relatedness of injuries. The difficulties are a result of a lack of research that pertain to injuries related to specific occupations.

An anonymous, self-administered musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs) survey was created by OHCOW to determine demographics, occupational risk factors, specific injuries related to body segments and psychosocial issues such as seeking medical attention, and reporting of injury. To date the survey has been administered and completed by 57 nurses, 157 custodians, 55 nickel

miners, and 86 diamond drillers. These surveys are an excellent method for establishing a database for the types of injuries amongst occupations, they also give a profile of where Joint Health & Safety Committees should focus their attention to reduce the incidence of MSD.

All clients referred to OHCOW for MSD related claims complete one of these surveys for establishing a database. However, anyone who is interested in completing surveys for large worksites is also invited to partake in this with the results being shared to the workplace parties. The surveys are simple to complete and are available on-line so geographic distances are not an issue when conducting this type of research.

For more information please contact OHCOW Sudbury.

ERGONOMIC HAZARDS AND GREENHOUSE WORKERS

Greenhouses are in full swing at this time of year. Feverously planting, cultivating, pruning, watering and organizing row upon row of plants. Greenhouse workers are exposed to numerous ergonomic hazards such as awkward and heavy lifting and carrying, awkward forward bending, far reaches, and heat stress. Workers are often misinformed of many of these hazards or lack training. It is important for staff to be aware of the many hazards and how to prevent injury, especially once the full summer weather increases the risk of suffering heat related illnesses. Simple education on proper warm-up, safe lifting techniques, proper use of carts, dollies, and wheelbarrows can decrease the risk of back and shoulder injuries. In addition, proper care when shov-

eling and moving dirt when planting (many Greenhouses offer residential planting services), staff can learn to protect their bodies in order to have a healthy working career. This is especially important for young workers who may only be employed during the summer months. These seasonal staff are at the greatest risk. Many of these tips should also be applied when working at home. For more information on Greenhouse workers and safe gardening tips, contact OHCOW Sudbury.



WHY DO THIS NEWSLETTER....?

In our catchment area, we are hearing from many advocates that they are feeling isolated. In providing this newsletter OHCOW is striving to reduce this isolation, and enhance communication networks amongst advocates and OHCOW. It is

hoped that OHCOW can provide more support to each advocate by providing up-to-date information on current health and safety topics.

OHCOW — WHO WE ARE? HOW & WHO CAN WE HELP?

OHCOW is a valuable occupational health related resource that is available to your members at no cost. The Occupational Health Clinics for Ontario Workers (OHCOW) were established in 1989 and are funded by the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB). There are clinics in Hamilton, Toronto, Sarnia, Windsor and Sudbury. Staffed by a multi-disciplinary team of specially trained occupa-

tional health doctors, occupational health nurses, occupational hygienists, ergonomists, researchers, and administrators, each OHCOW clinic provides comprehensive occupational health services and information. Our mandate is the prevention of occupational illnesses and injuries. We do this through the identification of the causes which have led to illnesses and injuries. This also provides us with a window into the workplace.

In order to carry out our work we partner with, among others, pub-

lic health officials; universities; the Ministry of Labour; the Ministry of Health; the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB); and organizations such as cancer coalitions. OHCOW works with medical and nursing schools to, provide occupational education to medical and nursing students. We also work with unions holding clinics for workers about illnesses which they think might be work related. In short, we have the experience, the knowledge and the credibility to assist you.

We're on the web!
<http://www.ohcow.on.ca/clinics/sudbury/>

OHCOW SUDBURY WEBSITE

Did you know that OHCOW Sudbury updates its website on a monthly basis? Each month features a new article written by an OHCOW staff member on current issues within occupational health and safety.

The website also contains information regarding past case studies, research projects, staff biogra-

phies, games & tests, past articles on health and safety issues, and information on education seminars that OHCOW offers.

Check it out!!!

<http://www.ohcow.on.ca/clinics/sudbury>

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

We welcome feedback for generating topics that would be of interest to advocates. Please forward any question or suggested topics to be covered in future issues either by e-mail (Sudbury@ohcow.on.ca), phone (705-523-2330) or fax (705-523-2606) by using the contact information below.

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Occupational Health
 Clinics for Ontario
 Workers Inc.

Centres de santé
 des travailleurs (ses)
 de l'Ontario Inc.

