
Foreword

This issue of the Journal of Safety Research (JSR) brings to the public eye the papers discussed at a recent international conference, Economic Evaluation of Occupational Health and Safety Interventions at the Company Level. This conference, held in November 2004, in Washington DC, was co-organized by the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) and the World Health Organization (WHO), with co-sponsorship from the International Labour Organization (ILO), the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), the International Commission on Occupational Health (ICOH), and two teams representing the National Occupational Research Agenda priority areas of Intervention Effectiveness Research and Social and Economic Consequences of Workplace Illness and Injury.

For the first time ever, members of the global occupational health and safety community who are interested in the economic evaluation of health and safety interventions and programs at the company level came together. The objective of the conference was to examine the current status of the use of economic knowledge and tools to demonstrate the economic gains from health and safety interventions in the workplace. The organizers had the goal of reviewing several existing systems and confirming or further developing economic evaluation tools for use by employers, workers, government agencies, academia, and other safety and health practitioners in both developed and developing nations. Approximately 60 persons from government agencies, public and private research organizations, academic institutions, private industry, and worker groups were invited to discuss their individual professional experience, judgment, and recommendations.

NIOSH and WHO invited presentations of six key economic evaluation tools currently in use at the company level. Each is described in an article within the Special Conference Proceeding Section in this JSR issue. The tools ranged from individualized approaches for small businesses in the Netherlands, to a structured CD-ROM tool in use at garment factories in Central America, to a highly sophisticated computerized system used in corporation settings in the United States.

- **ProductAbility**, developed and presented by Dr. Maurice Oxenburgh of Australia
- **The Tool Kit**, developed for use in Central American garment factories, and presented by Dr. Rafael Amador Rodezno of Nicaragua
- **Participation for Understanding**, developed and presented by Mr. Ernst Koningsveld of the Netherlands
- **Return on Health, Safety and Environmental Investments (ROHSEI)**, developed for large businesses, and presented by Ms. Joanne Lindhard of the United States
- **Net Costs**, developed for the WHO and presented by Dr. Supriya Lahtri of the United States
- **The Potential**, developed for use in Finland and Sweden, and presented by Dr. Monica Bergstrom of Finland.

Company users of the tools recounted their experiences with the tools. The following six articles in this issue bring these insights to our readers.

The conference invitees represented all facets of the international safety and health community, including large and small businesses, labor, academia, and government. They were asked to discuss whether the economic evaluation and data collection tools adequately represent the current state of the art methods and accurately calculate the costs and benefits of interventions designed to improve working conditions. The conference workshops provided an effective platform for participants to comment upon existing models and tools, to interpret research findings, and to identify appropriate methods for economic evaluation. The discussions were lively and engaging.

Commitments were made by the attendees to advance our understanding of data elements and economic principles needed for companies in both developed and developing countries to conduct economic evaluations of safety and health interventions. Agreement was reached to pursue research needs for improved economic evaluation modeling, and to begin development of a coherent strategy to increase the use of economic evaluation at the company level throughout the world. The attendees constitute the first members of a planned worldwide network of multidisciplinary professionals to advance...
the objectives of this conference. Some of the follow-up activities are described in the final article within this Special Conference Proceeding Section. We hope our JSR readers will join with us by using one or more of these tools, and will work with us to develop additional user-friendly tools for use at company level. We also seek colleagues to advance the understanding of common elements needed in these tools.

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