

Abstract for poster proposal: IAPA 2006 forum

Title : *GUIDE and TOOLS for MODIFIED WORK: Decision aid tools for the Workplace*

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Background: There is scientific evidence and a growing consensus that rehabilitation programs that provide modified work and/or ergonomic interventions to workers with back pain are more likely to improve health status and reduce work absence. However, there is also evidence that the communication between the workplace and treating clinicians needed for such programs to work is often lacking. Moreover, frontline supervisors responsible for selecting modified work are often ill equipped to do so and face major organizational barriers.

Methods: Based on scientific evidence, previously conducted needs assessment and consensus discussion among co-investigators, principles and strategies for modified work (MW) were elucidated and an algorithm of the steps to follow in a MW Program was developed and summarized in a guide book. Key physical work demands and functional limitations relevant to back pain and 3 types of upper extremity disorders were identified (elbow, wrist & hand and neck & shoulder). Decision aid tools were designed that allow frontline workplace personnel to assess the physical demands of proposed MW tasks, communicate them to treating physicians and allow physicians to communicate injured workers' limitations to the workplace. To evaluate the degree of implementation of the new approach and to identify obstacles and factors facilitating implementation, a qualitative implementation evaluation study was carried out in 3 companies over a 2-year period. Based on the results of this study, the guide and all decision aid tools were revised.

Results: The final version of the **Tools for Modified Work (TMW)** guide including its decision aid tools were redesigned and published in both French and English. They are intended to assist workplace stakeholders, in a wide range of work environments, plan and implement return-to-work programs for injured workers.

The guide describes steps for setting up a modified work program. It also includes an algorithm to follow injured workers through their return to work process.

Three series of simple-to-use decision aid tools are annexed to the guide. They allow frontline workplace personnel to select work tasks appropriate to the injured worker's capacities. Each body-site-specific series contains:

1. a worksheet to estimate the physical demands of work tasks proposed for modified work;
2. a modified work proposal form to succinctly convey the physical work demands to the treating physician based on the above evaluation;
3. a form to seek the treating physician's recommendations about the worker's temporary work restrictions.

This guide may be particularly useful to professionals who accompany workplace actors through the process of setting up return-to-work programs and as a reference document for workplace-based committees mandated to implement structured modified work measures.

Sponsoring institutions: produced by the Montreal Department of Public Health in collaboration with the *Institut national de santé publique du Québec* (INSPQ- Quebec Public Health Institute), the *Institut de recherche Robert-Sauvé en santé et en sécurité du travail* (IRSST) and professionals from the ASP Métal Électrique (Bipartite Health and Safety Association for the Metal and Electric Products Manufacturing Sector) and the Commission de la santé et de la sécurité au travail (CSST- Quebec's Workplace Health and Safety Commission), with funding from HEALNet and the IRSST.

For additional information or order forms:

1. See TMW web pages: www.santepub-mtl.qc.ca/omrt/ **Cost:** \$20 (includes TMW Guide and a full set of decision aid tools)
2. Contact Jean-Luc Malo, the research assistant of this project, at jean-luc.malo@ergoplan.net.