

BULLETIN

Experts to study effects of chemical exposures on respiratory health

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by RACHEL NOTLEY and CAROL RIVIERE

HSA is assisting with a study of the effect of occupational chemical exposure on the respiratory health of various groups of health care professionals. This study is being conducted by members of the Occupational and Environmental Lung Diseases Research Unit of the Department of Medicine, in conjunction with the Occupational Hygiene Programme of the University of British Columbia.

As part of this study, questionnaires will be mailed in the last week of January to HSA members working in various paramedical professions.

Members will be asked to describe the degree to which they suffer from respiratory problems, and their level of exposure to certain chemicals at work.

In addition to this questionnaire survey, the researchers will be conducting a detailed field study of specific paramedical groups who are believed to develop respiratory and other health problems due to occupational exposure to various chemicals. This field study will include lung function testing and testing for bronchial hyperresponsiveness, in conjunction with measuring workplace exposure to various chemicals.

All information provided by HSA members will be handled in a strictly confidential manner. It is hoped that at least preliminary results from both studies will be available for review at the 1999 HSA Convention.

Many of our members have known for a long time that their workplace exposure to various chemicals is having negative short term and long term effects on their health.

The results of these studies are expected to provide empirical evidence which will enable HSA to advocate more effectively on behalf of these members ... both to obtain assistance for members whose health has already been compromised by chemical exposure, and to advocate for effective prevention measures to minimize future harmful chemical exposure at work.

For this reason, all members who receive a questionnaire, or who are invited to participate in the field study, are strongly encouraged to cooperate fully with the researchers conducting these studies.

Carol Riviere is HSAs Labour Relations Officer for OH&S /WCB issues while Rachel Notley is on leave.

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