Kim Knowlton, PACE WHPP Medical Screening Coordinator, Pursues Public Health PhD

Kim Knowlton, the PACE/WHPP Medical Screening Coordinator since November 1998, left the program that she had helped guide to fruition, to focus on her personal research and studies. Knowlton, who is in a Ph.D. program in environmental studies at Columbia University’s prestigious Joseph H. Mailman School of Public Health, will be working on a research project on the public health impact of global warming and urban sprawl.

Knowlton, who has also worked as a consultant and researcher on radioactive waste management, solid waste disposal and health care safety, received a BA from Cornell University and a Master’s degree in Environmental and Occupational Health Science from Hunter College. Along with Sylvia Kieding the PACE/WHPP Project Director for the WHPP and the PACE local union coordinators, Knowlton was instrumental in assisting project director Steven Markowitz, M.D. in the creation of one of the largest medical screening programs of its kind in America. According to Knowlton, “something on this scale has never been done before.”

Although Knowlton left to pursue other interests, she states emphatically and unequivocally that working on the PACE/WHPP program has been “the most meaningful job I ever had. I felt that what we did achieved good. The whole program is a testament to the power of organized labor to get a program in place to help its workers.”

While no one has been officially named to replace Knowlton, Lori Bode the former appointment scheduler and K-25 workers — has largely been responsible for filling the void left by Knowlton.

Written by Justin Yoo

DOL and DOE Propose Regulations to Implement New Federal Compensation Law for Energy Employees

The Energy Employees Occupational Illness Compensation Program Act (EEOICPA) of 2000 was not a stand-alone piece of legislation. Regulations are required to spell out how the various agencies charged with responsibilities under the Act will implement it. There are two sections of the Act: the federal portion administered by the Department of Labor (DOL) which governs federal claims for certain cancers, silicosis and beryllium disease; the other, administered by the Department of Energy (DOE), which governs state claims filed as a result of other occupational diseases caused by exposure to hazardous material.

Both agencies have issued proposed rules that suffer from some severe shortcomings. The DOL has published Interim Final Regulations setting out how DOL will handle federal compensation claims under the EEOICPA. The most glaring weaknesses of the regulations are: their narrow definition of survivor (children under 18 and those who were dependent and widows/ widowers at time of death); the appeals process, and the failure to specify whether medical expenses for diagnosing an illness are covered. DOL is now receiving comments on its regulations. Until the rules are final, claims are being processed under the Interim Final Regulations that went into effect on July 31, 2001.

DOE issued draft regulations in September 2001 to outline procedures for workers to get DOE assistance on state compensation claims. The DOE proposals are far more burdensome than the DOL regulations. It does not seem that they will truly aid any worker with a state claim. Once again, as DOE workers are all too familiar with, the fox is in charge of the chicken coop with these proposed rules. DOE proposes that DOE first review federal compensation claims. The DOE proposals are:

- Claims tentatively approved ..................................... 1,500
- Claims on the way to NIOSH for dose reconstruction ...................................................... 6,700
- Claims filed .............................................................. 14,000
- Payments made (majority are uranium miners) .................................................. 437
- Claims with final approval ........................................ 749
- Claims tentatively approved .................................. 1,500
- Claims on the way to NIOSH for dose reconstruction ............................................. 6,700
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From left to right: US Senator Mitch McConnell, Martha Alt (Clara Harding’s daughter), Clara Harding, and US Secretary of Labor Elaine Chao at the ceremony where Clara received her $150,000 lump sum payment for her federal compensation claim.
A Testimonial by Michael Parker, WHPP Lung Cancer Screening Participant

Two months ago, I was a healthy 53-year old man. Now, by the grace of God, and the early detection CT scan, I am a cancer survivor. Cancer really didn’t have much meaning to me. It was something that happened to someone else, something I really didn’t care about. Now, cancer is a reality. On August 13th, I had the lower third of my lung removed. The doctors think they got it all. I may not even have to take chemotherapy.

Early detection is the #1 cure for cancer. I consider myself very lucky to have participated in the Worker Health Protection Program (WHPP), especially the early detection CT scan. I believe this program saved my life. If I had waited until I actually felt this cancer, it would have probably spread throughout my body. The early detection scan found a place on my lung almost a year ago. They monitored this every three months. In June of this year, I received a letter advising me to go to my physician immediately. The spot had grown since my last scan. This led to the removal of a third of my lung.

In all of this, I had about 8 hours of my time at no cost for the WHPP physical and the four CT scans. Not a bad trade-off for my life. I urge everyone to participate in this program. It could save your life.

Sincerely,
Michael Parker

PACe Worker Health Protection Program Physician Profile

Dr. Charles R. Boge, M.D. is one of several local physicians providing screening examinations for former workers from the Idaho National Engineering and Environmental Laboratory (INEEL) in Idaho Falls, Idaho.

Dr. Boge opened his private surgical orthopedics practice after moving to Idaho Falls in 1964. In 1980, he changed his practice to non-surgical orthopedics. For five years, from 1990 to 1995, Dr. Boge joined the INEEL Occupational Medical Program. In addition to his medical practice, Dr. Boge is involved in other occupational health-related activities. For example, in 1995, at the request of Idaho’s Governor Phil Batt, Dr. Boge began serving on the State of Idaho Governor’s Workers’ Compensation Advisory Committee.

Dr. Boge attributes much of his success to his wife, Janeice. Janeice worked with Dr. Boge in his practice for years, helping with patient scheduling, questions and insurance. She continues to work with him today on the PACE Worker Health Protection Program. Former INEEL workers are greeted at the door by the warm smile, patient eyes and friendly voice of Janeice Boge. “Welcome. Come on in. I will be your guide today.” When Janeice isn’t assisting Dr. Boge, she works at the medical library at the Eastern Idaho Regional Medical Center in Idaho Falls, where she helps with retrieval of medical information.

The Boges have a very systematic approach to scheduling. They rotate the former workers through the physical, i.e. while someone is getting a chest x-ray, another is getting blood drawn, someone else is getting a hearing test and the doctor is seeing another. These steps help maintain patient flow and minimize waiting time.

Dr. Boge says, “This has been one of the most enjoyable jobs I’ve ever had. I’ve learned so much about INEEL from former workers.” He takes time to answer all health-related questions and has said, “I don’t want you to leave today until I’ve answered all your questions.”

We here at Idaho Falls are pleased to have Dr. Charles Boge and his wife Janeice working with the PACE Worker Health Protection Program.

Written by David Fry, PACE Local Coordinator

WHPP Staff Attends DOL Training Class in Knoxville for DOE-funded Medical Screening Programs

In August 2001, eight WHPP local coordinators and Lori Bode of Queens College attended a special Department of Labor (DOL) class for DOE-funded medical screening programs. The class focused on training medical screening project staff to help current and former workers and survivors fill out federal claims under the new Energy Employees Occupational Illness Compensation Program Act (EEOICP). This Act became effective on July 31, 2001.

The class prepared participants to do the following:

- Provide information to potential claimants. Claimants need to understand what the legislation covers, how to file a claim, what documentation is needed, and what happens after a claim is filed;
- Assist claimants with filling out claim forms;
- Refer claimants to the DOL/DOE Resource Centers where they will officially file their claims or to the DOE Office of Worker Advocacy for help with a state workers’ compensation claim.

Reaction to the class among WHPP participants was mixed. All agreed that useful information was provided. However, they were less certain that this would improve the help workers get once they got to the DOL/DOE Resource Centers. Jeanne Cisco, benefits representative for the Portsmouth plant, voiced the general sentiment of the WHPP representatives. “The training was fine. What I worry about is the follow-up with the Resource Centers. Those centers are not helping people get what they need for a satisfactory claim.”

If you need help with a claim, contact one of the WHPP local coordinators whose names and phone numbers are listed in this newsletter.

Written by Jeanne Cisco and Sylvia Kieding

WHPP Success At-A-Glance (as of 10-31-01)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No. of callers</th>
<th>6,306</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No. of people screened</td>
<td>5,102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of workshops completed</td>
<td>185</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of participants who attended workshops</td>
<td>2,301</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If you haven’t taken advantage of the WHPP free medical screening exam, you should call 1-888-241-1199, to schedule an appointment. Once you have had your exam and received your results, you may qualify for the WHPP Early Lung Cancer Detection Program. A mobile CT scan unit rotates between the three Gaseous Diffusion Plant union halls approximately every two weeks. The number to call to schedule a CT scan is 1-866-228-7226.

Written by Amy Manowitz
C

hronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) is the broad medical term for a group of lung diseases that cause a slow, progressive shortness of breath. The two main diseases that are included within COPD are chronic bronchitis and emphysema. Some people have a predominately
type of COPD, but many individuals develop, to varying degrees, a combination of these two diseases.

COPD is a relatively common condition. According to the American Lung Association,
an estimated 16 million Americans have COPD and it is the fourth leading cause of death in the United States.

What causes COPD?

In the United States, cigarette smoking is by far the most significant cause of COPD. In fact, it is estimated that 90 per-

The progression of COPD depends

1. Episodic of shortness of breath on exertion

2. Cough with phlegm production for at least 3 months for 2 or more consecutive years

3. Breathing becomes more labored for at least 3 months for 2 or more consecutive years

4. Episodes of shortness of breath on exertion

How does COPD progress?

The progression of COPD typically occurs over a long period of time and is not immediate. The airflow changes become progressively worse, leading to increased breathlessness, and eventually to the development of more severe symptoms. However, some individuals may experience more rapid progression of the disease, which can be a result of certain factors such as smoking, air pollution, or genetic predisposition. For more information about COPD, the American Lung Association can be contacted at 1-800-LUNG –USA (1-800-586-4872) or on the Internet at http://www.lungusa.org

Written by Lyndon Rose, M.D., M.P.H.
Portsmouth Worker Wins State Comp Claim

Tim Gannon, a former Portsmouth worker with colon cancer, recently won his Ohio state compensation claim. Gannon was awarded temporary total disability. This means he will be compensated for lost wages retroactive to May 1999, the date that his illness forced him to stop working. He was also awarded payment for his past medical expenses, which could amount to hundreds of thousands of dollars.

In his chapter, WHPP Project Director, wrote a letter stating his belief that Gannon’s cancer was caused by his occupational exposures. Dr. Markowitz’s letter was instrumental in winning the award, as was the hard work of his union, PACE Local 5-689. Local benefits representative Jeanne Cisco was unyielding in her determination that Gannon wins his case.

Gannon had asked the Department of Energy to help him with the filing of his Ohio state compensation claim. Subtitle D of the Energy Employees Occupational Illness and Compensation Program Act of 2000 (EEOICP) requires DOE to assist workers with state compensation claims. DOE, however, told Gannon that they had not yet established rules and that he would have to wait for assistance. Gannon could not wait because of the Ohio statute of limitations and had to seek legal assistance that will be paid out of his worker compensation award. Has the DOE helped out, he would not have those legal fees. His union helped out with expenses by holding luncheon sales at the Portsmouth gaseous diffusion plant.

The Department of Labor provided Gannon with the $150,000 lump sum payment for his illness since colon cancer is one of the cancers covered under the federal portion of the compensation act. The lump sum of $150,000 does not go far in covering lost wages and treatment for cancer, however. Gannon, therefore, is grateful for the union and Dr. Markowitz’s assistance in recovering those expenses through his state claim.

Written by Sylvia Keding

Update On WHPP Beryllium Screening

The PAC/Queens College Worker Health Protection Program continues to screen DOE workers for beryllium sensitivity in two of the four participating plants — K-25 in Oak Ridge, Tennessee, and INEEL in Idaho Falls. As of early September 2001, 2,488 workers from these two facilities have had at least one Beryllium Lymphocyte Proliferation Test (LPT). This blood test determines whether a person has a sensitivity to the metal beryllium. If the first LPT is positive, a second test is done. If a second test is positive, the person has a “confirmed sensitivity” to beryllium (abbreviated as “Be”).

Queens College is currently looking at the results of the beryllium blood tests for this group, to see if workers with at least one positive Be blood test have something in common with regard to their work histories. The hope is to learn whether working in specific job positions or buildings, or the number of years of Be exposure, affect the likelihood of developing a sensitivity to beryllium. In addition, high-risk areas within these DOE facilities will be identified.

Of the 2,488 workers already screened:
- 37 have a confirmed sensitivity to beryllium (that is, they have had two abnormal, or positive, LPT results)
- 85 have an unconfirmed sensitivity to beryllium (that is, they have had one abnormal and one normal, or negative, result)
- 72 workers have had one positive Be blood test. Results of a second test are not available yet for this group.

After workers are screened by clinical labs, the blood is sent to the National Jewish Medical Center in Denver, CO. Workers with abnormal Be blood tests are referred to the Oak Ridge Institute of Science and Education (ORISE) in Oak Ridge, TN. Workers with a confirmed sensitivity to beryllium can receive a free medical evaluation to determine whether they have chronic beryllium disease (CBD). CBD is a serious lung disease that can cause shortness of breath and other symptoms. Not every worker who is sensitive to beryllium will develop CBD. In fact, only 10% of sensitized individuals would be expected to develop CBD. Of the 36 workers in the WHPP Program who have a confirmed sensitivity, so far 1 has been diagnosed with CBD. There is no known cure for CBD, but treatment is available.

All funding for this beryllium testing program comes from the DOE. Furthermore, DOE workers diagnosed with CBD are eligible for monetary compensation under the Energy Employees Occupational Illness Compensation Program (EEICP), 2000. Covered employees who are suffering from CBD are eligible for a lump sum payment of $150,000 plus future medical benefits. Sensitized workers are entitled to receive regular medical examinations and check for the development of CBD.

WHPP has now received approval for beryllium screening of DOE workers from the gaseous diffusion plants in Paducah, Kentucky and Piketon, Ohio. We will begin in November 2001.

Written by Josh Cohen

Queens College Staff Visits K-25 Screening Clinics

From left to right: Lori Bode, Tammy Mattina and Dr. Helton of Park Med Ambulatory Care Oak Ridge, and Dr. Haiko during the visit to one of the WHPP screening clinics in Tennessee.

Dr. Wajdy Hailoo and Lori Bode from the Center for the Biology of Natural Systems (CBNS), Queens College, recently visited the WHPP clinic sites in Oak Ridge, Knoxville, and Harriman, Tennessee. The purpose of the visit was to exchange feedback about the medical screening program and to discuss how to improve the screening process. Tom Moser, WHPP Local Coordinator from the PACE International Union, went with the Queens College team and helped to communicate program issues as expressed by participants.

The visit was mutually beneficial,” explained Dr. Hailoo. “It allowed us to get to know the clinicians and the staff of these clinics better and, therefore, to have better day-to-day communication and participant follow-up.” The clinic staff members appreciated the opportunity to discuss the preliminary results of the medical screening program. In addition, they were pleased to be part of the overall worker health program.

The clinics expressed interest in receiving similar information and feedback on an ongoing basis. CBNS is currently programming its medical screening database so that a quarterly or semi-annual summary report is generated and mailed to the clinic. The clinics also supported CBNS’ plan to provide basic occupational medicine training to local physicians, especially primary care providers. This is important since they are the clinicians who would ultimately follow up on any findings discovered through the screening program. Attempts are being made currently to organize such educational events through the local medical organizations in the Knoxville/Oak Ridge area. CBNS occupational medicine specialists will travel to the site to provide the training.

The Queens College clinic visit was well received by the local union as expressed by Ricky Gallaher, President of PACE Local 5-268, during a visit the team had to the union hall. Back at CBNS, Dr. Markowitz, the Project Director and CBNS Director, expressed his view. “Overall the visit was successful in achieving its goals.” He indicated that similar visits to the other clinic sites are in the planning process.

Written by Wajdy Hailoo, M.D. and Lori Bode

Message from Gaylon Hanson, Local Representative INEEL: Pay it Forward

For many this is your third issue of Health Watch. You have had your physical and some of you may owe your life to the Worker Health Protection Program through early detection. If you didn’t call the Worker Health Protection Program yourself, then a friend, co-worker or local representative contacted you. If this program has helped you, you should be grateful for the efforts of the person that contacted you.

All of us have been touched through the efforts of others. Some people touch us for a brief moment through a kind word, helping hand or listening ear and their acts are not easily forgotten. The good feeling of helping others is very rewarding. I recently watched a movie entitled “Pay it Forward” where a young boy starts a chain of service that soon affects many lives. Each character in the movie is helped in a nutshell, I’m asking and enlisting all workers who either don’t know about this program or don’t understand it; they may be neighbors, church goers, relatives, friends or general acquaintances. You may be wondering where I’m headed with this article. Well, in a nutshell, I’m asking and enlisting all of you to put forth a real effort to let fellow workers know about this service. You can contact the PACE local coordinators with names of fellow colleagues or share the number at Queen’s College (1-888-241-1199) with those whom you contact. You are a valuable resource! And they may be forever grateful for your concern. The PACE-run WHPP has been the most successful program in all the DOE sites. It is because of worker involvement, the workshops, retiree organizations and people helping people.

Before I end, I feel the leaders of the WHPP need to be recognized from conception through implementation and for the future of the service. They know who they are. The examples they set are touching and for the future of the service. They know their acts are not easily forgotten. The good feeling of helping others is very rewarding. I recently watched a movie entitled “Pay it Forward” where a young boy starts a chain of service that soon affects many lives. Each character in the movie is helped.

In closing, remember the words “Pay it Forward”. We’re all involved in a great cause.

Written by Wajdy Hailoo, M.D. and Lori Bode

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