

From the Co-Guest Editors

The celebration of the 20th anniversary of WORK

1. Introduction

Work and its meaning for society as well as the individual has changed over time – we face globalization and economic crises, workers are required to be nationally and internationally mobile, we are concerned about emerging forms of disability and chronic illnesses, social and health care systems are changing and the responsibilities of health care professionals, employers and employees are subject to change as well. WORK was founded 20 years ago with the aim to be an international and interdisciplinary journal that provides research on work-related prevention, assessment and rehabilitation. For this purpose, authors that publish in WORK address a wide range of topics such as ergonomics, the working environment, and work-related topics across the life-span – from children to the elderly.

It occurs that in 2010, 20 years later, these aims remain of critical relevance to research and society. This 20th anniversary of WORK is a great opportunity to review how WORK has responded to its aims and how the editor in chief, the editorial board and authors who disseminated their studies in WORK have addressed emerging societal, economical, and political challenges related to work. Hence, this special issue was created in honour of the 20th anniversary of WORK. The aim of this special issue is to look back and celebrate the origins and evolution of WORK, but also to look forward and shape the directions for WORK, and how WORK can meet the needs of people concerned with topics related to work-related prevention, assessment, and rehabilitation on various levels – including the individual, institutional, societal, (inter-) national, and global level.

2. Celebrating reviews in this issue

The co-guest editors invited authors to think, reflect, and brainstorm together about the past, present, and the future of WORK. The articles in this journal are manifold – on one hand the sociological development of the knowledge base in WORK is explored through an historical examination of the editorial board (Shaw, Prodingler, Jacobs and Shaw) and through a review that focused on the work domains of prevention (Ravenek, Campbell-Bryson, Shaw and Hughes), assessment (Shaw, Campbell, Jacobs and Prodingler) and rehabilitation (Gangapersad, et al.; Prodingler and Magalhaes) In addition, in our call for papers we elicited submissions using systematic (Leyshon et al., Ravenek et al., Shaw et al.) or integrated approaches to reviews (Lysaght, Donnelly and Luong) on work relevant topics from the literature in and beyond WORK. All of the papers in this special issue helped us to look forward and offer the scholarly and clinical community directions for research and dialogue in the field of work. Other important papers in this journal include the column of *Speaking of Research*. Rumrill, Fitzgerald, and Merchant provide an analysis of the different types of review papers used in work practice and provide comparisons of the value of scoping reviews over other types of reviews used in this area. Complimenting their paper are several scoping reviews of articles published in WORK over 20 years. These articles demonstrate how scoping reviews can inform research and practice and specifically investigated the topics of work rehabilitation, chronic pain, and low back pain.

This issue also presents narrative reflections offered by two editorial board members. One reflection is authored by Nancy MacRae in the occupational transitions column. Lynn Shaw wrote the narrative review of the assessment domain of WORK. Finally, WORK

is also celebrating a new column to support knowledge translation. We are featuring a user friendly “tip sheet” for people who are newly unemployed. This document was created based on research and experiential knowledge on employment transitions and is included with permission from the American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA). We encourage you to develop and use knowledge translation papers to assist in sharing the knowledge published in *WORK* with knowledge users such as persons with work illnesses, injuries and disabilities, health professionals, the media, and policy makers. We welcome you submitting these “tip” sheets to the Editor-in-chief (EIC) at [kjacobson@bu.edu](mailto:kjacobs@bu.edu).

3. Future directions on research in *WORK* and beyond

WORK is promoted as an interdisciplinary and international journal. The review of its editorial board supports that the efforts of the EIC and board members have contributed within *WORK* and beyond this journal to support this achievement. Future directions for research are to extend the evaluation of *WORK*'s editorial board's contributions as leaders in their areas of expertise both within and beyond the journal. A more in-depth evaluation using metrics is indicated.

WORK promotes research in all domains of work. In the Ravenek, Campbell-Byrson, Shaw, and Hughes' scoping review of low back pain in *WORK* prevention was the domain of highest interest by contributors from around the world. In the Leyshon et al. article on ergonomics of office workers, prevention is a key outcome requiring further study. Future directions in this area are needed to expand an understanding of both primary and secondary prevention of illness, injury or disability.

WORK has developed an extensive knowledge base in the assessment domain of work practice. The review by Shaw, Campbell, Jacobs, and Prodinge suggests that future research must address assessments of all dimensions of work, the workplace, and an understanding of the new and emerging occupational demands of work. This was also supported by the review on low back pain by Ravenek, Campbell-Bryson, Shaw, and Hughes and the review on chronic pain by Gangapersad et al.

WORK has also made a large contribution to work-rehabilitation within the rehabilitation domain of *WORK*. Prodinge and Magalhaes suggest that clarity is needed on the use of return to work terminology to

support comparisons of knowledge within and beyond *WORK*. More attention to consistent terminology is required to better advance international perspectives and to broaden the understanding of the contexts that support or hinder rehabilitation. A similar need to share the contexts that support or hinder rehabilitation was noted by Shaw, Campbell, Jacobs, and Prodinge in the assessment domain of work.

All of the reviews that analyzed the contributions of *WORK* over time have underscored the need to investigate further how *WORK* has advanced the knowledge base on work practice beyond the realm of this journal. As such, the editors of this issue call upon scholars, researchers, and students to conduct reviews of the knowledge base in *WORK*. To support this effort, a database was developed entitled the *WORK* ARTicle Database. Those interested in pursuing future reviews are encouraged to contact Karen Jacobs ([kjacobson@bu.edu](mailto:kjacobs@bu.edu)) or Lynn Shaw (leshaw@uwo.ca) for access to the database.

The other articles in this special issue also provide new directions based on evidence and knowledge synthesis. One of the themes that was emergent through papers received is the interest in work/employment and pain. While there is an extensive knowledge base on pain outside of *WORK* this area requires specific attention to advance it. All of the review articles, the Lysaght, Donnelly, and Luong review on acute pain in management of musculoskeletal disorders, the Ravenek et al. review on multidisciplinary management of low back pain, and the Shaw et al. review on chiropractic management of Whiplash-Associated Disorders (WAD) of acute, subacute, and chronic pain suggest that there is a need for more research on interdisciplinary approaches and more consensus on understanding the nature of pain and its management. There is a need to promote the development of evidence-based knowledge about the effectiveness of interdisciplinary interventions that can promote the resumption of meaningful work. To this end, the ergonomic review by Leyshon et al. suggests that more consistent use of the safety, productivity, and comfort outcomes would advance evidence in the prevention of primary and secondary disability at work.

We all have much to celebrate. We thank all of the members of the editorial board our reviewers, our support staff, our contributors from around the world in creating this breadth of knowledge to inform change and to support people at work. To Karen Jacobs, her co-guest editors extend our thanks to her enthusiasm

that has inspired all of us to work in collaboration to achieve 20 years of WORK; her vision became our vision.

We encourage you to review these papers, draw on the current evidence for use in your area of practice and to engage in research and discussion to promote the development of knowledge that is consistent and

coherent with advancing the evidence base in work practice.

Cheers,
Lynn Shaw, Birgit Prodinger, and Karen Jacobs