

NORA news

National Occupational Research Agenda Volume 3 • Number 3 • Winter 2001

Message from NIOSH

As many of you know, I have been serving as the Acting Director of NIOSH since November 1, 2000 when Dr. Linda Rosenstock left to become Dean of the School of Public Health at UCLA. I left my duties as the Director of NIOSH's Division of Surveillance, Hazard Evaluations and Field Studies at our Cincinnati laboratories to assume this position and am pleased to serve NIOSH during this transition period.

I am firmly committed to the National Occupational Research Agenda. NORA is truly one of NIOSH's great successes. From the partnerships it has built, to the important research it has produced, NORA has proven a model for the creation and implementation of a research agenda. As NORA enters its fifth year, we recognize that it has reached the mid-point of its ten year plan. I intend to nurture NORA during my tenure and to prevent NORA from falling into a mid-life crisis at this its midway mark.

The FY 2001 budget will enable us to further strengthen NORA, both extramurally and intramurally. NIOSH received \$10,000,000 in NORA funding this year. We are excited about this opportunity to enhance safety and health research.

Finally, let me remind you of an upcoming NORA celebration - the NORA Symposium - which will be held in Washington, D.C. on June 27, 2001. This meeting will review successful NORA activities to date and look to build on these successes through future collaborations and research. Several concurrent scientific sessions will showcase NORA-related research. In addition, the NORA Liaison Committee will award the NORA Partnership Award for Worker Health and Safety, 2001. I hope you will join us for this exciting event!

Laurence Fine

Larry Fine, M.D., Dr.P.H.
Acting Director



Partnerships in Action: NOIRS and Best Practices Conferences

October 17th was a busy day for NIOSH and for Pittsburgh. NIOSH sponsored two critical NORA-related conferences in Pittsburgh that day. First, along with the American Society of Safety Engineers (ASSE) and the Liberty Mutual Research Center for Safety and Health, NIOSH sponsored the National Occupational Injury Research Symposium, NOIRS 2000. The second conference, Enhancing Working Conditions and Patient Safety: Best Practices was done with the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ), the National Center for Infectious Diseases (NCID/CDC), the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), and the Veterans Health Administration (VHA).

With over 350 participants, NOIRS 2000 was as successful as the first NOIRS held in 1997. It provided a forum for sharing new research results and innovative methods and approaches

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NOIRS 2000, Pittsburgh, PA

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Partner Perspective



Frank Mirer, PhD
*Director, United Auto Workers
Health and Safety Department*

The United Auto Workers (UAW) has worked with the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) for a long time. NIOSH funded our 1980's efforts in epidemiology, which identified previously unknown increased cancer rates in common industrial processes, such as metal machining. This in turn lead to funded, labor-management directed research programs with each of the auto companies. That research spurred practical efforts to control exposure to hazards. Our 1995 tri-partnership with NIOSH and General Motors Corp., just renewed for 5 years, predates NORA. This industry-labor-government cooperative research agreement will continue efforts to protect workers' safety and health through research in hearing loss prevention, mixed exposure assessment, work organization, and control technology. Both our tri-partite and labor management partnerships benefit from working with NORA teams.

As a member of the NORA Liaison Committee, I saw the power of the NORA process to influence the research priorities of institutions beyond the government, and within the government beyond NIOSH. Workers have long benefited from NIOSH efforts, but NORA has broadened the base. Through NORA, organizations and institutions that are not "partners" in the traditional sense are able to work together in the name of occupational and safety health research. This is only one of the many rewards of NORA.

NORA has brought increased attention to the reality of workplace hazards. The strength of NORA research has resulted in greater credibility for all organizations and individuals who aim to protect the workforce.

NIOSH efforts in launching the NORA process were a great gift to the occupational safety and health community. The challenge for those of us involved in implementing NORA will be to continue the progress we have made to date. We have to put across the notion that a world class industry, corporation, or other institution will fund and foster research into the hazards its employees face, and will fully involve those employees in the research and research planning process. The lessons we have learned through developing and implementing NORA will guide us as we continue the great work that NIOSH, together with the many NORA partners, has begun. ■

Get Online with the NORA Teams



Keep updated on NORA research and Team activities by visiting NORA Team websites and registering for NORA Team listservs to receive periodic emails about the work of a particular Team. The following Teams have such services available.

Allergic & Irritant Dermatitis Listserv:

Send an email to LISTSERV@LISTSERV.CDC.GOV.
In the message area, type:

SUBSCRIBE OCCSKIN-L your last name, your first name (For example, SUBSCRIBE OCCSKIN-L, Doe, John)

You will receive an email for confirmation.
Respond to the email by typing "ok" in the message area.
You will then receive an email to welcome you to the list.

Mixed Exposures

Website: <http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/mixed.html>

Listsrv: nora-mixed-exposures@listserv.cdc.gov

(Follow the same instructions as above to register.)

As always, you can check out general NORA information on the NORA website:

<http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/norhmpg.html> ■

NORA Liaison Committee Meeting

The NORA Liaison Committee met on December 7, 2000 in Washington D.C. Dr. Larry Fine, NIOSH Acting Director, addressed the group for the first time. Committee members discussed plans for the June 27, 2001 NORA Symposium and the Partnering Award. They also reviewed the Stakeholder Survey and leveraging opportunities, as well as their own role and activities in the NORA process. ■

Team Conferences and Workshops

In the past few months NIOSH's NORA Teams and NORA Partners have been busy with the following events.

Contact Dermatitis 2000 - Blending Science with Best Practice

The NORA Allergic and Irritant Dermatitis Team co-sponsored this conference. The meeting was held at the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center in Dallas in November. It was organized by the Experimental Contact Dermatitis Research Group and the American Contact Dermatitis Society and was co-sponsored by the National Institute for Arthritis and Musculoskeletal and Skin Diseases (NIAMS), NIOSH, and the Skin Diseases Research Centers at UT Southwestern Medical Center.

Tripartite Diisocyanate Interest Group Meeting

Representatives from NIOSH, academia, the Canadian National Institute of Public Health, the American Chemistry Council, and the U.S. diisocyanates producers came together for this meeting in November 2000 as part of the NORA program of Research on Occupational Asthma Reduction (ROAR). The meeting addressed the medical and environmental monitoring of diisocyanates, pathogenetic mechanisms, diagnostic issues, and prevention strategies. Attendees identified several priority issues and established task groups for future collaborative actions.

Human Assistive Technologies and Automation

NIOSH, the American Society of Mechanical Engineers (ASME), and the National Science Foundation (NSF) sponsored this workshop in Baltimore in September. The workshop aimed to develop research directions for both the research field and potential research sponsors. The conference report provides guidance on areas of impact and need, and guidance on the relevance and potential impact of further research. The workshop focused on a new generation of mechanical systems that will be integrated with human controls and may even be "worn" by humans. The systems are intended to assist individuals in manipulating micro-scale to mega-size objects in repetitive-task environments. The new generation of mechanical devices will be favorably suited for such environments being lightweight, reconfigurable, biocompatible and having embedded actuation, a balance of mechanical and control function, and customized flexibility.

Antineoplastic Drugs - Safe Handling

Three NORA Teams - Fertility and Pregnancy Abnormalities, Control Technology and Personal Protective Equipment, and Exposure Assessment Methods - sponsored a Workshop in September in Washington, D.C. to examine potential exposures during the lifecycle of these drugs, from their manufacture to their administration to the patient. The workshop identified engineering control research needs. In December, the same teams sponsored a working group meeting to develop a list of specific actions to reduce exposures. The working group is continuing to develop more specifics on engineering controls, work practices, and

personal protective equipment. The next meeting will be in the spring.

Novel Methods for Bioaerosol Exposure Assessment in Health Effects Research

The NORA Indoor Environment Team and the Occupational Asthma/Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease Team co-sponsored this workshop in September in Morgantown. The Teams brought together national and international experts to provide information on novel methods of estimating biological exposures that may be related to health outcomes in non-industrial indoor work environments.

Mixed Exposures Team - Workshop of Federal Partners

The NORA Mixed Exposures Team held this conference in September in Morgantown, WV. Attendees discussed the status of on-going, government-sponsored mixed exposures research, issues of mutual concern, and possible collaborations. They also worked to better identify knowledge gaps and priorities for mixed exposures research.

Special Populations at Risk - APHA Panel

Four members of the Special Populations at Risk Team presented a team panel at the annual American Public Health Association's meeting "Eliminating Health Disparities" in November in Boston. The topics presented were Reaching Low Wage Immigrant Workers; Here Come the Baby Boomers: Challenges and Opportunities for Occupational Safety and Health; Addressing Minority Occupational Health Issues from the Jackson Heart Study; and Research Priorities for Eliminating Occupational Health Disparities. The presentations were followed by discussion with attendees. ■

Publications

Musculoskeletal Disorders Team

National Occupational Research Agenda for Musculoskeletal Disorders: Research Topics for the Next Decade, A Report by the NORA Musculoskeletal Disorders Team

DHHS (NIOSH) Publication No. 2001-117

The report by the NORA Musculoskeletal Disorders Team was compiled after extensive stakeholder input. The first phase of the process consisted of three regional focus group meetings with practitioners from a wide range of industry sectors to discuss research gaps, intervention effectiveness, surveillance, and implementation needs. The second phase of the process convened academics and researchers together to discuss the findings of the practitioner focus groups.

Based on the input from these focus groups, the NORA Musculoskeletal Disorders Team developed an agenda of the most important research gaps in four topic areas: Surveillance Research, Etiologic and Medical Research, Intervention Research, and Improving the Research Process.

The Report also contains three appendices: Practitioner Listing of Research Issues, Selected Industry-Specific Practitioner Research Issues, and Academic Input on What is Possible in the Next Five Years. ■

Partnerships in Action: NOIRS and Best Practices Conferences *continued from page 1*

to occupational injury prevention. The conference identified and addressed emerging issues, such as injury risks in the telecommunication tower construction and maintenance industry. Participant feedback was extremely positive; they appreciated the conference organization and particularly enjoyed the poster session.

The Best Practices conference brought together approximately 250 individuals and organizations to improve health care workers' safety and health conditions in the hopes of positively impacting safety and health of patients. There was a focus on the underlying importance of safety systems. Participants enjoyed panel presentations and poster exhibits, and participated actively in breakout sessions. ■



NOIRS 2000, Pittsburgh, PA



Mark Your Calendar

NORA Symposium 2001

June 27, 2001

Washington, D.C.

Omni Shoreham Hotel



For more information on NORA
contact NIOSH at:

1-800-35-NIOSH (1-800-356-4674)

or visit the NIOSH Homepage at:

<http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/norahmpg.html>

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