

Kentucky begins surveillance of occupational burns

By Amy Scheerer

Occupational burns place a tremendous burden on the workforce, the medical community, and employers in Kentucky. In cooperation with the Kentucky Department for Public Health (KDPH), the Occupational Injury Prevention Program (OIPP) at the Kentucky Injury Prevention and Research Center (KIPRC) will establish a statewide occupational burn surveillance system to identify causes and trends of

work-related burns and monitor progress toward reducing these injuries. Funding for this project is provided by the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH). Case identification began in January and will continue for five years.

Between 1994 and 1996, 52 workers died from burns, explosions or electrocutions. Most of these workers were less than 40 years old. In 1995, 1,195 Workers' Compensation claims were filed for work-related burns; 55 workers were hospitalized.

The industries with the most claims were retail trade (34 percent) and manufacturing (23 percent). About 68 percent of the claims resulted in lost work time, and 32 percent resulted in temporary disability. An average of 6.4 days were lost from work, and the total value for these claims was more than \$2.6 million.

This initiative for a statewide burn injury surveillance system focuses on identifying risk factors associated with the workplace (e.g., the task, environment, machine, worker) to develop injury prevention strategies. Using epidemiologic principles, the specific aims of the project are to:

- * Identify the incidence of burns as an occupational injury (including thermal, electrical, chemical, friction and radiation burns)
- * Identify trends in burn cases quickly
- * Develop and implement interventions to reduce the incidence of burn injury
- * Evaluate the economic savings of interventions

Cases will be identified primarily through hospital burn units, emergency

departments, the Kentucky Department of Workers' Claims, Kentucky Employers' Mutual Insurance, and death certificates. Members of the medical community, most notably private physicians and emergency department personnel, are in an excellent position to notify OIPP of work-related burn cases presenting for treatment. Only through the active involvement of health care providers can this project succeed in identifying and ultimately reducing the incidence of these traumatic injuries. Additionally, practitioners will be an invaluable part of the project by disseminating prevention information to patients whose work histories indicate a potential for burn injuries.

Data generated from burn surveillance activities will be disseminated to workers and employers, trade organizations, health professionals, public agencies, and the general public via news media.

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REHABILITATION

APTA publishes guide to physical therapist practice

By Pearson Brown

The American Physical Therapy Association (APTA) has just released the first comprehensive *Guide to Physical Therapist Practice* (the Guide), a guide that describes what physical therapists do, their role in today's health care system, and the benefits of the services they provide.

"The Guide may well be the most significant practice document ever developed by the association. We expect it to become an essential resource in every physical therapist's practice," said APTA President Jan K. Richardson, PT, Ph.D., OCS.

The 500-page Guide, whose development took more than three years of efforts by more than 1,000 physical therapists, is designed to be the definitive resource for the profession of physical therapy.

Part I of the Guide describes the elements of patient/client management and examinations; Part II describes common management strategies for specific diagnostic groups within the musculoskeletal, neuromuscular, cardiopulmonary, and integumentary systems. The Guide was designed to serve as a framework for clinical decision making for both the new practitioner and the experienced professional. It can also be used as an educational tool for health care policymakers and third-party payers.

The American Physical Therapy Association is a national professional organization representing more than 75,000 members. Its goals are to foster advancements in physical therapy practice, research, and education.

Pearson Brown, is with the American Physical Therapy Association, and may be reached on (703) 706-3217



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