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## 6th National Occupational Injury Research Symposium: Advancing Occupational Injury Research Through Integration and Partnership

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### Abstract

**Introduction:** The National Occupational Injury Research Symposium (NOIRS) is the only regularly held forum exclusively dedicated to occupational injury research and prevention.

**Method:** The 2015 conference theme, advancing occupational injury research through integration and partnership, shaped the conference and is reflected in articles selected for this special issue.

**Results' Conclusion:** The 6th NOIRS, held May 19–21, 2015, brought together more than 250 researchers, occupational safety practitioners and students to share and discuss occupational injury research. Articles in this special issue highlight some of the research presented at the conference, reflect multiple scientific disciplines and approaches, cover a breadth of occupational injury causes and worker populations, and provide examples of research advanced by partnerships.

**Practical Applications:** The next NOIRS, tentatively scheduled for 2018, will build upon the theme of integration and partnership as well as feedback from conference attendees.

### Keywords

Injury prevention; Occupational; Conference

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On May 19–21, 2015, more than 250 researchers, occupational safety practitioners and students came together to share and discuss occupational injury research at the 6th National Occupational Injury Research Symposium (NOIRS). NOIRS, which was first held in 1997, is the only regularly held forum exclusively dedicated to occupational injury research and prevention. This special issue of the journal helps to highlight a breadth of high quality research presented at the 2015 NOIRS, and to make this knowledge available to a broader audience beyond conference attendees. Abstracts for all NOIRS scientific sessions are also available on the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) website (NIOSH, 2016), and a webinar highlighting occupational motor vehicle safety research is available on YouTube (SAVIR and NIOSH, 2015).

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The theme for the 2015 NOIRS was “advancing occupational injury research through integration and partnership.” This theme shaped the conference, is reflected in articles chosen for this special issue, and can guide future NOIRS.

Integration and partnership were key in holding the conference. NIOSH would not have been able to hold such a productive meeting without the partnership of our co-sponsors, the American Society of Safety Engineers (ASSE), Liberty Mutual Research Institute for Safety (LMRIS), the National Safety Council (NSC), and the Society for Advancement of Violence and Injury Research (SAVIR). The scientific program integrated perspectives of co-sponsors that included scientific leadership, the needs of practitioners who work on the frontlines to keep workers safe, and interests in translating research into practice. Co-sponsor contests and awards (NIOSH, 2016) helped celebrate quality science, highlighted the importance of integrating stakeholders into the research process, and encouraged student participation, all important for fostering future advances in preventing worker injuries. Winners were publicized by NIOSH and award sponsors. Some of the awards included a cash prize or funding support for student travel to the conference. Generous support of networking events by ASSE and NSC, and breaks by LMRIS, were instrumental in providing opportunities for attendees from varied backgrounds to mix. NOIRS attendees included NIOSH researchers and grantees, researchers from other government agencies and the private sector, safety professionals, industry representatives, labor professionals, and students from both research and practitioner programs. Finally, NSC co-sponsorship made this special issue of the journal possible.

Integration of scientific disciplines and approaches is important to advance the prevention of occupational injuries. The causes and prevention of occupational injuries are complex, involving an interplay of physical hazards and energy with sociocultural dynamics of workplaces and sociodemographic characteristics of workers. In selecting papers for this issue, the editorial team sought to integrate high quality research that encompasses multiple scientific approaches and disciplines. Articles include qualitative and quantitative research approaches from the fields of epidemiology and social sciences. The article by Lincoln et al. focuses on the development of engineering controls. Two papers are scientific reviews (Estill et al., Steenstra et al.).

Advancing occupational injury prevention will require attention to the breadth of injury causes, different worker populations impacted, and different sociocultural and political backdrops in which injuries occur. Research in this issue includes articles addressing: vehicle crashes (Bell et al., Jennissen et al.), falls (Bunting et al.), and violence (Brann and Hartley); and injuries among farmers (Jennissen et al.; Mazur; and Reed & Claunch), construction workers (Bunting et al.), truck drivers (Bell et al.), nurses (Brann & Hartley), police (Fekedulegn et al.), fire fighters (Pollack et al.), foundry workers (Porru et al.), utility workers (Volberg et al.), fishermen (Lincoln et al.) and military personnel (Patel et al.). The systematic review by Steenstra et al. (this issue) addresses older workers, a rising worker demographic in the United States and other countries. The article by Fagan and Hodgson (this issue) evaluates employer compliance with U.S. government requirements to record occupational injuries. While research in this issue predominantly addresses occupational injuries in the United States, one article addresses injuries to U.S. military personnel in

Afghanistan and Iraq (Patel et al.), and another the prevention of injuries in Italian foundries (Porru et al.)

Articles in this issue highlight the value of integration and partnership in advancing occupational injury prevention research. The analyses by Volberg et al. were made possible by 18 electric power companies combining data to describe the epidemiology of injuries among their workers. The article by Lincoln et al. (this issue) involved integrating input from fishing vessel owners in developing and testing engineering controls to prevent machine entanglements of fishermen. Several articles involve partnerships in which research was conducted in workplaces to evaluate risk factors for injury or programs to prevent injury (Bell et al., Fekudulegn et al., Pollack et al., Porru et al.). The article by Bunting et al. is an evaluation of a national fall prevention campaign conducted in partnership by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), CPWR- The Center for Construction Research and Training, and NIOSH.

For the final example of how the conference theme shaped NOIRS, NIOSH and NSC surveyed attendees to assess the impact of the symposium, and so that attendees' perspectives and experiences could be integrated into planning for the next NOIRS (Schuler et al.). Feedback from the post-conference survey will be used in considering the venue for the next NOIRS, the organization of the symposium, symposium topics, and ancillary events to foster attendee networking.

In 1997, when the first NOIRS was held, 6238 workers died from work-related injuries and 5.7 million workers sustained nonfatal injuries (BLS, 2016a,b). In 2015, there were 4836 deaths and 3.5 million nonfatal injuries (BLS, 2016a,b). While there has been considerable progress in reducing occupational injuries in the nearly 20 years since the first NOIRS was held, the need for occupational injury research, and the translation of that research into practice, persists. Far too many workers are killed or suffer disabling injuries each year, with significant impacts on workers and their families, employers and their businesses, and communities. There are numerous challenges threatening continued improvements in worker safety that require collective efforts of researchers, industry, labor and government. NIOSH looks forward to establishing partnerships to hold the 7th NOIRS, tentatively scheduled for 2018, and providing a forum for the integration of researchers and practitioners to advance occupational injury research and prevention.

## Disclaimer:

The findings and conclusions in this report are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health. The authors are all U.S. Government employees and the article is in the public domain.

## Biography

**Dawn N. Castillo, M.P.H** is the Director of the Division of Safety Research at NIOSH. The Division serves as the focal point for traumatic occupational injury research and prevention programs at NIOSH. Prior to being appointed as Division Director in 2011, Ms. Castillo served as Chief of a Division Branch responsible for occupational injury data collection,

analysis and interpretation. Ms. Castillo is an epidemiologist and has interests in pragmatic research that can be translated into practice to improve worker safety.

**Christine R. Schuler**, PhD is the Associate Director for Science for the Division of Safety Research at NIOSH. Dr. Schuler was a Research Epidemiologist at NIOSH for 15 years before joining the Division of Safety Research. She conducted field studies in respiratory epidemiology in manufacturing facilities, where the workers taught her a great deal about translating the knowledge gained from conducting such studies and the impact science can have in making the workplace safer.

**Cammie Chaumont Menéndez**, M.P.H., Ph.D. is a Research Epidemiologist within the Analysis and Field Evaluations Branch of the Division of Safety Research at NIOSH. Dr. Chaumont Menéndez first came to NIOSH in 2007 as an Epidemic Intelligence Service Officer and has continued her field research focused on the epidemiology of occupational injuries among high risk and vulnerable worker populations and identifying effective and cost-effective interventions to prevent them so workers can lead healthful and productive lives.

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