



SAFETYNET
Centre for OHS Research

**Presentation to the 2019
Statutory Review Committee –
Workers' Compensation System**

Dr. Kim Cullen (kcullen@mun.ca)

Dr. Lorenzo Moro (lmoro@mun.ca)

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Our agenda



SafetyNet: who we are and what we do

How we do OHS Research



Why research is important to decision-making in OHS

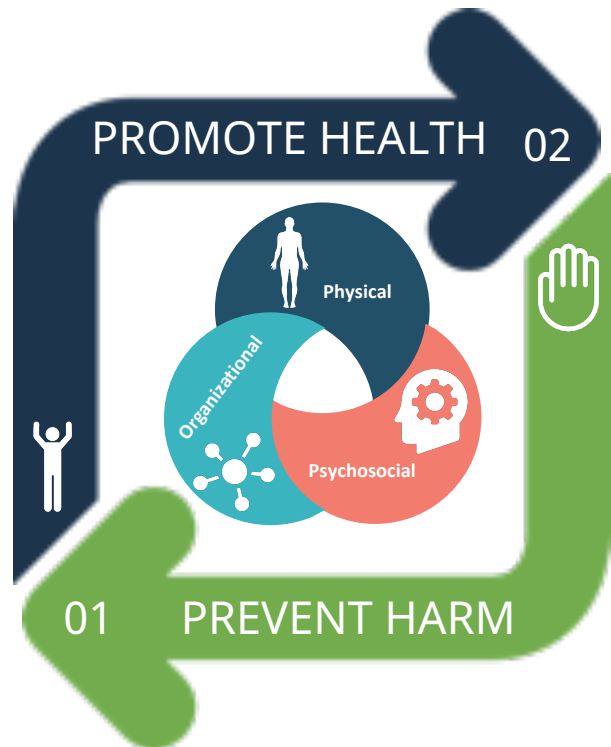
Key recommendations



About: Kim Cullen

- Assistant Professor, School of Human Kinetics & Recreation
- Cross-appt. with Division of Community Health & Humanities (MED)
- Co-Director, SafetyNet Centre for Occupational Health & Safety

Understanding **modifiable** workplace factors for **physical** and **mental** health



About: Lorenzo Moro

- M.Sc., Ph.D. in Naval Architecture and Marine Engineering, University of Trieste (Italy)
- Co-Director of SafetyNet (June 2020 – present)
- Assistant Professor, Faculty of Engineering and Applied Science, Department of Ocean and Naval Architectural Engineering, MUN (August 2015 – present)
- Co-lead and co-investigator in several multi-disciplinary research projects funded by Provincial and Federal funding agencies, and from private sector
- Member of ISSC international committees on Ship Structural Design



SafetyNet:

Who we are and what we do



Who we are and what we do



Eastern Canada's **only** community-university research centre dedicated to OHS research

Our mandate:



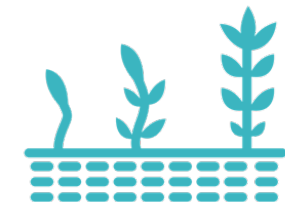
**Multidisciplinary
Relevant Research**



**Contextualized
Evidence Synthesis**



**Facilitate knowledge exchange
b/w researchers & stakeholders**



**Building OHS capacity
within the province**

We conduct actionable research across 6 broad OHS themes



SafetyNet: **How we do OHS Research**



Our work is:



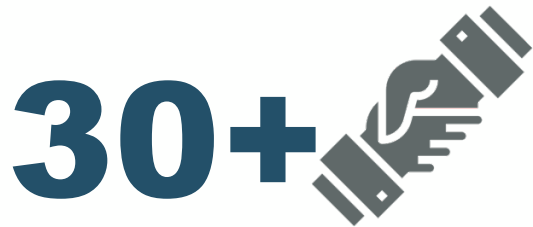
- Multidisciplinary
- We formulate our research questions through **consultations** with our stakeholders and community partners, in a truly participatory approach
- We are the 'go-to' research partner in Atlantic Canada for national research teams seeking to include our region, our researchers, and our issues.



200+
Collaborators



46 + 113
Universities Research Partners



Community partners (both locally and nationally)



60 ASMs & trainees
20 Academic Units

We're making an impact:



95

Peer-reviewed papers
in high quality
scientific journals



1600+

Citations of the 95 peer-
reviewed articles

\$8M



Research funding

26



Research reports

17



Tools, guides, resources
for OHS stakeholders

17



Books /
book chapters

212

Conference presentations
to scientific audiences



60+



Public engagement (meetings,
briefings, seminars, workshops)

Building OHS research capacity:



NEW:

Masters in OHS, now in 3rd year.
1st in Atlantic Canada, 4th in Canada



70+

Training of highly qualified personnel (students, trainees, research assistants, postdoctoral fellows)

Advancing scientific methodology in OHS research



For example, contextualized evidence syntheses in OHS

Ongoing dialogues with OHS stakeholders helps to ensure our research efforts directly meet the needs of our OHS community partners.



And helps to build their capacity to access and use high quality evidence for policy and practice development.

How we do OHS research



Examples of research activity that exemplify this:

- asthma in shellfish workers
- the health impacts of mining and milling asbestos
- the prevention of occupational disease
- the OHS challenges faced by geographically mobile workers

Why is research important to decision-making in OHS?



1. OHS research is important



OHS research is important

- Decision making in workplaces, economic sectors, and policy forums needs to be informed by research-based evidence
- This evidence needs to be of the highest quality and to be up to date
- Research comes in a variety of forms - basic, applied, primary, synthesized

2. *Applied OHS* research is important:

For decision making by government, regulators, employers, OHS practitioners, and employees to:

- identify issues requiring action
- scan the horizon for the best research studies and the best practices in Canada and elsewhere
- review and assess the best available knowledge on key questions
- evaluate performance of policies and practices



3. *Context* is essential



Beyond learning 'what works' to addressing 'will it work here?'

- The health and safety challenges faced by this province's workers and workplaces are in many ways distinctive and under-researched
- Findings based on generic research done in, and for, other jurisdictions may not work well here
- Findings and recommendations that are context-sensitive are more likely to be taken up here and more likely to work
- Designing original research projects that are shaped to fit the needs and capacities of this province is most readily done by researchers based here
- The same is true for work that takes research done elsewhere and adapts it to fit the NL context: researchers based here and connected to stakeholders here are best able to do this

An example of successful contextualization

Occupational Noise Exposures of fish harvesters in NL



4. OHS research is challenging in Canada

Funding of OHS research is limited and challenging

- OHS research does not have an obvious home in any of Canada's three national research councils



- When they do fund OHS research, it is rarely focused on NL or on Atlantic Canada



*Community groups don't have money per se; we can go to our larger organizations for support, but the research would not be specific to the NL context.
(Community Partner)*



¹ See "SafetyNet and its future. Strategic planning consultations and implications report. July 2017. (https://www.mun.ca/safetynet/SafetyNet_Strategic_Planning_2017.pdf)

4. OHS research is challenging in NL



We can learn from other jurisdictions in Canada

- WorkplaceNL has increased funding for research, especially in recent years
- More readily available information on key aspects of the research process would be useful:
 - an accounting of potential, available, and allocated WorkplaceNL research funds
 - clarity on the adjudication process and feedback to unsuccessful applicants
 - summaries of research findings and outputs (including reports) on WorkplaceNL's website

This would allow researchers and stakeholders to more easily take action on high-priority research opportunities relevant to key OHS decision-makers in the province.

5. How WorkplaceNL can grow its support of OHS research



WorkplaceNL's Research Initiatives program supports short-duration projects

- Typically: Maximum of 12-month duration, \$60,000-150,000
- However, only providing funding for short-term projects presents challenges for OHS researchers
 - Some research activities cannot be completed in 12-month period
 - Misalignment of timelines between researchers and community partners
 - Insufficient time to build capacity of OHS trainees

5. How WorkplaceNL can grow its support of OHS research



Building a funding mechanism for longer duration research activities would be valuable.

This would create the opportunity for WorkplaceNL to build:

- flexibility in the allowable budgets for different research activities
- distinct funding programs for differentially scaled research efforts

“Research and information from SafetyNet have been important for lobbying for policy and legislative change and for advancing workers’ rights. We don’t have the expertise to do this without the help and engagement of SafetyNet.”¹ (Community Partner)



¹ See “SafetyNet and its future. Strategic planning consultations and implications report. July 2017. (https://www.mun.ca/safetynet/SafetyNet_Strategic_Planning_2017.pdf)

5. How WorkplaceNL can grow its support of OHS research

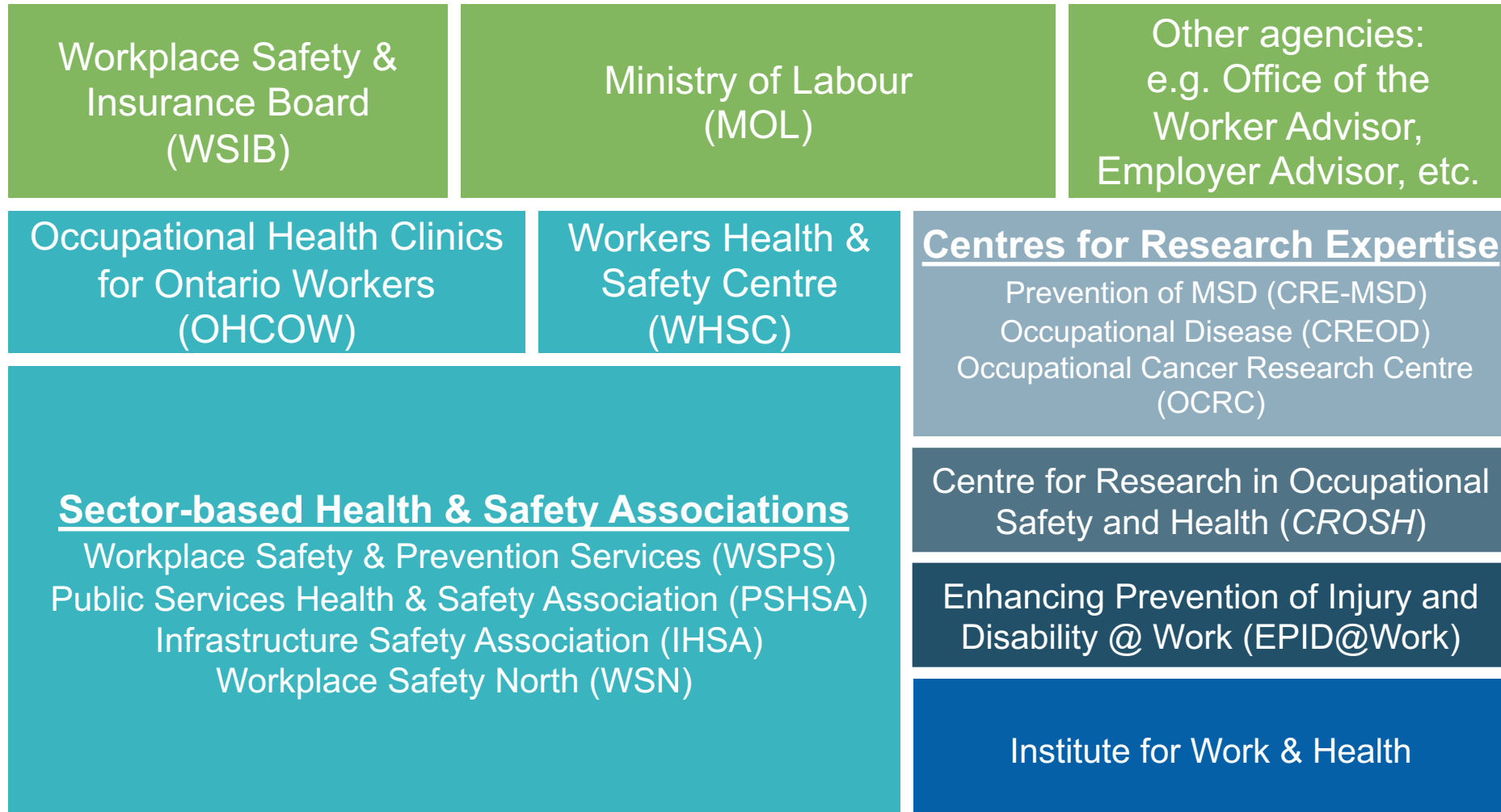


We could learn from other jurisdictions in Canada

The Commission, the province's OHS stakeholders and researchers could benefit from more formal and multidisciplinary engagements

- Priority should be placed on identifying high priority issues for actionable research that will help promote and protect the health and safety of NL's workers.
 - Increased funding for local OHS research
 - Applicable to the NL context
 - Using local expertise
- Consider funding an independent applied OHS research centre within the province, following the examples set in other jurisdictions (e.g., Ontario, Quebec, etc.)

Ontario's Health and Safety System



We needed SafetyNet to get ... projects off the ground. [Our partnership with SafetyNet is] essential for improving safety in the industry. It's a cost NOT to have SafetyNet for the industry.”¹ (Community Partner)



¹ See "SafetyNet and its future. Strategic planning consultations and implications report. July 2017. (https://www.mun.ca/safetynet/SafetyNet_Strategic_Planning_2017.pdf)

Key recommendations



Key recommendations



The Commission should consider the following ways of enhancing the role and impact of research in its activities and use of funding:

1. Give research more prominence and visibility in decision-making and communication processes
2. Making the communications about its research activities and its research funding programs more visible, more transparent, and more comprehensive
3. Seeking to build a better partnership with Memorial University researchers, including consulting them on the design of its research funding and knowledge exchange activities
 - Developing greater research and professional capacity **in** this province **for** this province

Key recommendations



4. Expanding the size, scope, and flexibility of its research funding to facilitate greater partnerships with OHS researchers:
 - provide a mixture of larger and smaller funding opportunities
 - fund commissioned research, as well as, researcher-driven projects
 - provide longer-term funding, including funding for graduate students and post-doctoral fellows for whom short-term grants are not optimal

5. Consider support for a university-based OHS research centre based at Memorial that can:
 - pursue multiple research and knowledge exchange activities concurrently
 - properly fund and train highly qualified personnel
 - provide ongoing horizon scanning, primary research, and knowledge synthesis for WorkplaceNL and its key OHS stakeholders

INTER disciplinary
imp **ACT**



MEMORIAL
UNIVERSITY



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Thank You.

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