



	Title	Barriers to return-to-work for workers with contact dermatitis
	Year	2005
Investigators	Linn Holness, Irena Kudla, Chris Feng, Michael Sidiropoulos, Sharon Switzer-McIntyre	
CREOD Research Program	Occupational Skin Disease	
Research Theme	Outcomes	
Funder	Unfunded	
Product Type	Student Research Project – clinical	
Background	Work-related contact dermatitis (WRCD) often results in work disruption. Return-to-work (RTW) outcomes have an important impact on disease and quality of life outcomes. There is little information available regarding barriers and facilitators to RTW for workers with contact dermatitis.	
Study Focus (Research Question/Goals/Methods)	Our goal was to identify possible barriers and facilitators to RTW for workers with WRCD. We surveyed 15 patients who were being assessed for possible work-related contact dermatitis at the St. Michael's Hospital Occupational Health Clinic (Toronto). Our survey probed current work and disease status, and asked participants to identify factors that they perceived to be barriers and facilitators to the RTW process.	
Key Findings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The most commonly identified RTW barriers were: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ongoing skin problems (33%). Workers were concerned that their pain, itching and bleeding would continue or get worse. - Continued exposure (27%). This concern was due to workers' inability to identify and then avoid the exposures that may have caused or contributed to their dermatitis. - Poor work environment (27%). Workers were concerned about poor hygiene and housekeeping practices that would result in continued exposure to causative agents, resulting in ongoing dermatitis. • The most commonly identified RTW facilitators were: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Availability of personal safety equipment (47%). Availability of appropriate gloves, face shield, and other protective clothing helped workers remain at work. - Availability of modified work (33%). Availability of modified work within the same company minimized harmful exposures. - Supportive coworkers/management (13%). Workers that could talk about their skin problem with coworkers felt more encouraged to remain at, or return to work. They had a supportive environment where their colleagues understood what they were going through, and coworkers would watch out for one another's safety. 	
Implications for Health/Labour Policy and Practice	RTW strategies that target the barriers and facilitators identified in this study may be the most effective. These barriers and facilitators may also be a source for further research in the WRCD population, and may prompt studies relating disease outcomes with workplace factors. A comparison of workers' perspectives with that of employers and health care professionals may also be useful.	
Publication & Presentation Information	<p><u>Publications</u></p> <p>Holness DL. Identifying return to work barriers for workers with occupational contact dermatitis. Contact Dermatitis 2006;55(Supp 1):45.</p> <p><u>Presentations</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Holness DL, Kudla I, Feng C, Sidiropoulos M, Switzer-McIntyre S. Identifying return to work barriers for workers with occupational contact dermatitis. European Society of Contact Dermatitis Annual Meeting, Berlin, September 2006. 	