

Guest Editorial

The Changing Face of Work

Over the past decade and a half, there have been widespread changes in the health care sector, in the workplaces in which we, as health professionals, spend large portions of our working lives. The traditional hospital of years gone by can rarely be found in the current health care environment. In fact, the delivery of health care services has become a fascinating and challenging task confronting administrators, politicians, policy developers and health care workers. Concurrently, therefore, the roles of the professionals erstwhile functioning within a prescribed and protected institutional context, have become broader, boundaries less clear and the input of clients/consumers/recipients of service has reached the 'front burner'. What our clients say, what they experience and what they want are issues that cannot be disregarded. Even within the parameters of managed care, influences are such that what our health care services look like has radically changed.

These shifts in workplaces and service delivery models are by no means isolated within the health care industry. The manufacturing sectors of our larger societal contexts are shifting, and the strength and influence of technology businesses as primary employers cannot be ignored. The workplace does not look the same anymore. Influences of globalization, cheaper manufacturing opportunities, wider and more diverse markets – all of these elements are critical components of what we now know as our working world.

When I was approached to consider being a guest editor for the *WORK: A Journal of Prevention, Assessment & Rehabilitation*, I was both delighted and tentative. The delights stemmed from my clear commitment to issues related to the injured worker for most of my professional life. The tentative response came more from my desire to use this opportunity to explore matters of the changing face of work, matters that are of particular personal importance to me.

When approached to consider editing a special edition of this journal, I was particularly conscious of a

personal commitment to attempt to highlight a couple of particular ideas. First, I have been growing more and more intrigued and perturbed by the complexity of attempting to return injured workers to a meaningful occupational future, and the critical nature of the role of rehabilitation professionals in facilitating this complicated process. Second, I have been personally invested in championing the establishment of support systems for employees now bereft of natural mentoring and supervisory relationships, due to the changed organizational models in place in health care. At first blush, these interests appear to be somewhat diverse; however, in actuality, they are quite connected. The importance of enabling healthy work place cultures is critical to both of these circumstances. Consequently, this edition of this journal has evolved into a collection of papers, thought pieces and letters, that address many facets of emerging workplace cultures, support processes to workers and the ever-increasingly complex task of addressing worker/workplace 'fit'.

I have relished the opportunity to read many submissions, select these few, and also to engage in both intellectual and practical discussions with authors around their ideas and projects. This is a mixed bag of reports about the results of academic inquiry as well as personal narratives that illustrate the struggle of ensuring a health care system based on spiritual values. It is intended to be a smorgasbord that provides you, the reader, with the chance to think about your own work place experiences and to consider where change has taken you over the past while. Rehabilitation professionals are very well prepared to provide support to workers of all kinds, faced with all kinds of concerns, and we will be the most effective if we gain comfort with ideas of facilitating function and the achievement of meaning in the face of change and loss.

I hope you, the reader, will share in this chance to reflect on practices from the US, Canada, Australia and Israel; to think about the importance of intangible ele-

ments of work and the connection between spirituality,
personal meaning and the work we do.

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