

Objectives

To lay the foundations for the development of an evidence-based strategy to identify barriers to return-to-work (RTW) among injured and ill workers and thereby help to improve the health and safety of workers in Newfoundland & Labrador (NL).

To bridge the research-to-practice gap by working directly with Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) organizations responsible for monitoring and improving OHS from key sectors of NL's economy.

Background

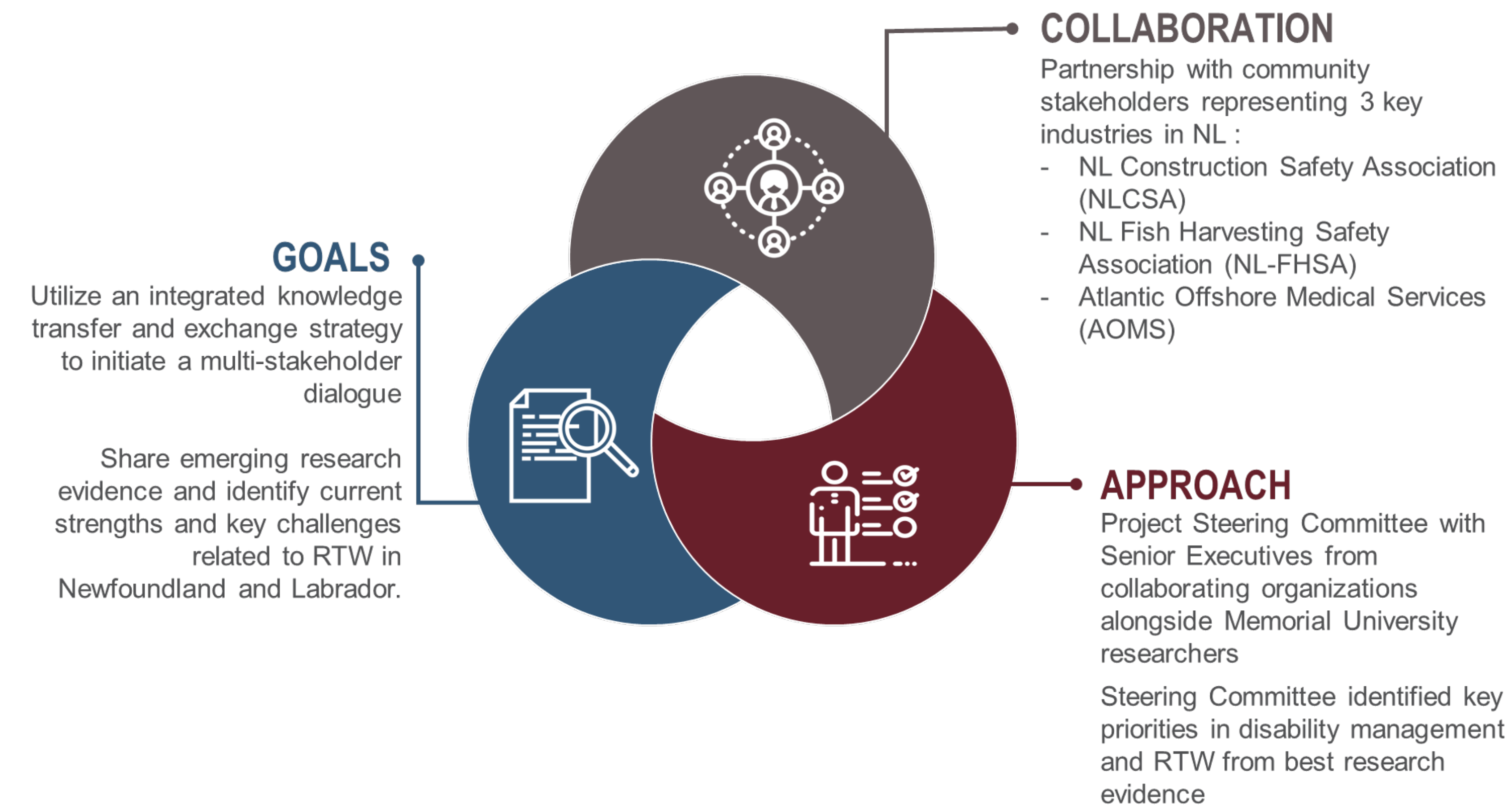
Musculoskeletal and mental health conditions continue to dominate as the two leading causes of work disability worldwide. While incidence rates have been declining, equivalent improvements in return-to-work rates have not been observed.

Over the last decade, researchers have focused on answering what can be done to support RTW, improve recovery and reduce productivity losses after injury/illness? We've learned that there are many effective RTW strategies that can be grouped into three categories: health-focused, service coordination, and work modification strategies. Although each on its own has merit, the evidence is clear that a RTW program that combines elements from each category, suited to each workplace's context and each worker's situation, works best.

Workplaces continue to face challenges in implementing these strategies. Societal changes are making improvements in RTW more difficult to achieve. Workforce aging poses particular challenges, as older workers often take longer to RTW than younger workers. Workers with precarious job arrangements also take longer than those with secure employment.

NL faces particular challenges, including: regionally distinct industries, a high prevalence of small and remote workplaces, and a workforce that is aging faster than in the rest of Canada. The province also has high rates of disability and unemployment and a declining labor force.

Methods



Results

Initial project steering committee discussions led to the organization of a 1-day workshop as a first step to link evidence and research to practice, planning and policy-making.

The "What makes return-to-work work?" Leadership Roundtable" was held on September 23, 2019 bringing together more than 40 key NL stakeholders in day-long presentations and discussions on current best evidence, emerging issues, and experiences with RTW in NL.

The Roundtable led to engaged discussions with the goal to identify ways to improve RTW experiences for workers and workplaces.

The project resulted in the formation of new relationships and a sustainable stakeholder / researcher network as well as making relevant research findings available and accessible for use in policy and practice.

Discussion

The Leadership Roundtable resulted in enhanced understandings of current RTW issues in NL workplaces as well as possible action steps, including:

- a newfound awareness that early and safe return to work (ESRTW) regulations exist and that there is a legal responsibility for employers to accommodate.
- an identified need for improved communication of context-specific knowledge and understandings of the RTW process, the role of workplaces and workers in the process, and workplace/industry- and workforce-specific resources, information, and innovative and creative tools for successful RTW - and *stay* at work
- that mental health concerns in the workplace are pervasive, less understood, and important to recognize and address
- an acknowledgement of the longer process of educating and changing culture, ideas, and attitudes.

The "What makes return-to-work work? Leadership Roundtable Report" is available at www.mun.ca/safetynet/RTWRoundtable.php

Conclusions

With the success of the Leadership Roundtable, we have begun the process of building and strengthening important connections between the university and the local OHS community as well as the process of facilitating multi-stakeholder dialogue aimed at a greater understanding of what we can do to help support RTW for musculoskeletal and mental health conditions.

The RTW Roundtable provided a venue for stakeholders to have a voice in establishing ongoing locally-focused OHS research priorities. The biggest impacts of this project include the development of a network of key OHS stakeholders, in multiple economic sectors in NL and with an interest in engaging in important and context-specific issues related to RTW in NL. This network has already identified areas to further explore knowledge translation and exchange opportunities.

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Objective

To lay the foundation for a strategy to identify and address the needs of injured and ill workers and improve the safety of workers.

To bridge the research and practice gap in Occupational Health and Safety for monitoring and improving the safety of workers in the economy.

Background

Musculoskeletal and mental health conditions continue to dominate as the two leading causes of work disability worldwide. While incidence rates have been declining, equivalent improvements in return-to-work rates have not been observed.

Over the last decade, researchers have focused on answering what can be done to support RTW, improve recovery and reduce productivity losses after injury/illness? We've learned that there are many effective RTW strategies that can be grouped into three categories: health-focused, service coordination, and work modification strategies. Although each on its own has merit, the evidence is clear that a RTW program that combines elements from each category, suited to each workplace's context and each worker's situation, works best.

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Working Together: Unpacking What Works in Return-To-Work

S. Behnamfar¹, K. Cullen¹, S. Bornstein², A. Butt², J. Manuel³, B. Greenslade⁴, L. O'Shea⁵

1. School of Human Kinetics, Memorial University 2. SafetyNet Centre for OHS Research, Memorial University 3. NL Construction Safety Association 4. NL Fish Harvesting Safety Association 5. Atlantic Offshore Medical Services (AOMS)

Objectives

To lay out a strategic approach to injured workers' safety
To bring together Occupational Health & Safety for economic recovery

Background

Musculoskeletal disorders are the two leading causes of occupational injury and illness. Rates have increased in recent years. Over the past decade, much has been done to address these issues after injury, but there are still service gaps. On its own, each organization has combined their efforts in a context of workplace safety. Societal goals are to achieve. We often take a fragmented, precarious employment. NL faces high prevalence of aging fast-growing population of disability and unemployment and a declining labor force.

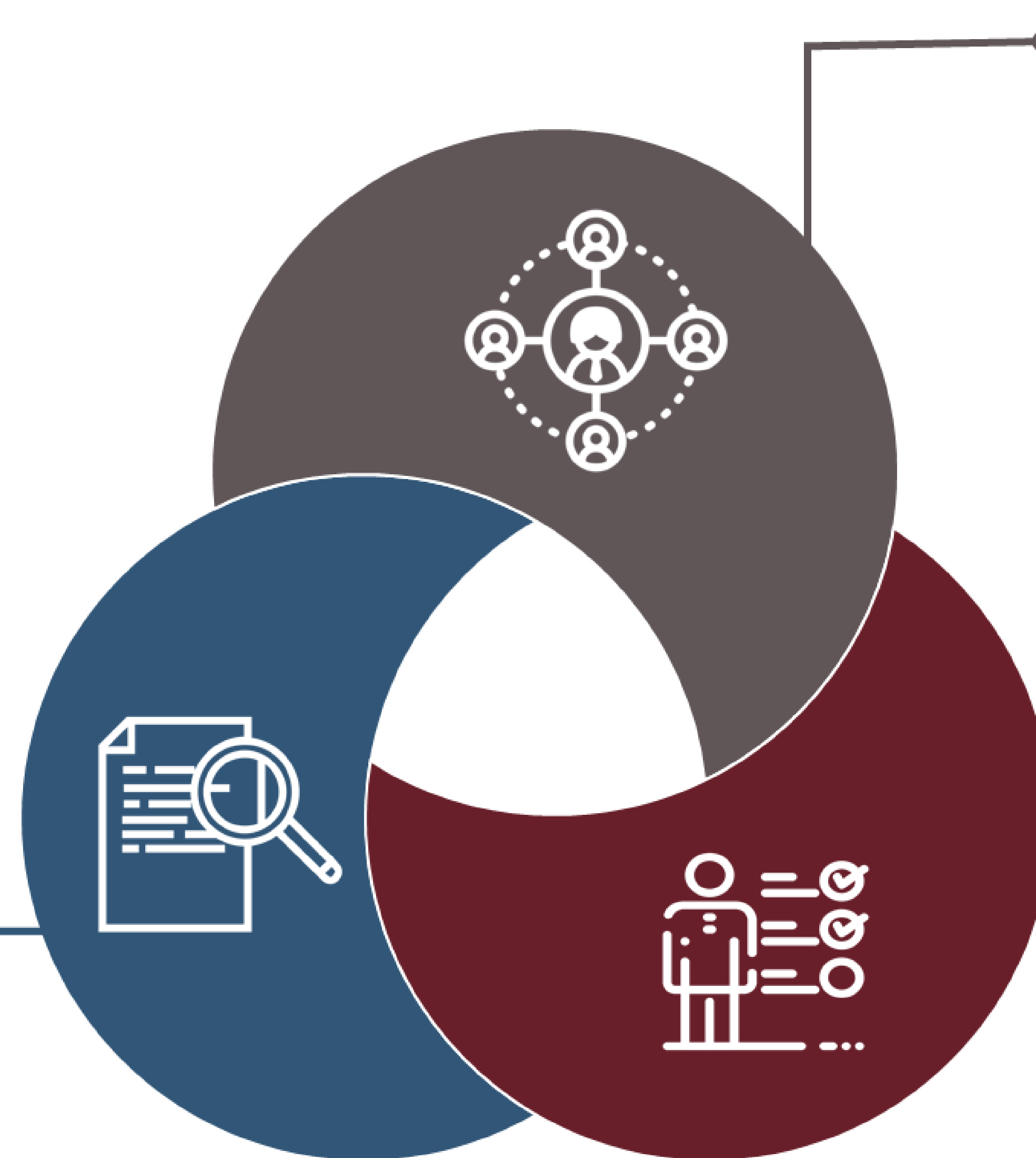
Methods

Discussion

GOALS

Utilize an integrated knowledge transfer and exchange strategy to initiate a multi-stakeholder dialogue

Share emerging research evidence and identify current strengths and key challenges related to RTW in Newfoundland and Labrador.



COLLABORATION

Partnership with community stakeholders representing 3 key industries in NL :

- NL Construction Safety Association (NLCSA)
- NL Fish Harvesting Safety Association (NL-FHSA)
- Atlantic Offshore Medical Services (AOMS)

APPROACH

Project Steering Committee with Senior Executives from collaborating organizations alongside Memorial University researchers

Steering Committee identified key priorities in disability management and RTW from best research evidence

The project resulted in the formation of new relationships and a sustainable stakeholder / researcher network as well as making relevant research findings available and accessible for use in policy and practice.

The project steering committee network has already identified areas to further explore knowledge translation and exchange opportunities.

Objectives

To lay the foundations for the development of a strategy to identify barriers to return-to-work for injured and ill workers and thereby help to improve the safety of workers in Newfoundland & Labrador.

To bridge the research-to-practice gap by working with the Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) organizations for monitoring and improving OHS from the local economy.

Results

Initial project steering committee discussions led to the organization of a 1-day workshop as a first step to link evidence and research to practice, planning and policy-making.

The “What makes return-to-work work?” Leadership Roundtable” was held on September 23, 2019 bringing together more than 40 key NL stakeholders in day-long presentations and discussions on current best evidence, emerging issues, and experiences with RTW in NL.

The Roundtable led to engaged discussions with the goal to identify ways to improve RTW experiences for workers and workplaces.

The project resulted in the formation of new relationships and a sustainable stakeholder / researcher network as well as making relevant research findings available and accessible for use in policy and practice.

Background

Musculoskeletal and mental health conditions are the two leading causes of work disability worldwide. While injury rates have been declining, equivalent improvement in recovery rates have not been observed.

Over the last decade, researchers have focused on what works to support RTW, improve recovery and return after injury/illness? We've learned that there are several strategies that can be grouped into three categories: service coordination, and work modification strategies. On its own has merit, the evidence is clear that a strategy that combines elements from each category, suited to the context and each worker's situation, works best.

Workplaces continue to face challenges in implementing these strategies. Societal changes are making improvements in health care more difficult to achieve. Workforce aging poses particular challenges as older workers often take longer to RTW than younger workers. Precarious job arrangements also take longer to resolve than standard employment.

NL faces particular challenges, including: regional disparities, high prevalence of small and remote workplaces, and an aging workforce. Aging faster than in the rest of Canada. The prevalence of disability and unemployment and a declining

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that early and safe return to work (ESRTW) is a legal responsibility for employers.

Improved communication of context-specific findings of the RTW process, the role of stakeholders in the process, and workplace/industry resources, information, and innovative and effective RTW - and stay at work strategies.

Patterns in the workplace are pervasive, less likely to recognize and address.

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“What makes return-to-work work? Leadership Roundtable Report” safetynet.nl/RTWRoundtable.php

Leadership Roundtable, we have begun the process of strengthening important connections within the local OHS community as well as the multi-stakeholder dialogue aimed at a greater understanding of what we can do to help support RTW for workers with health conditions.

Provided a venue for stakeholders to have a dialogue on locally-focused OHS research. Key facts of this project include the identification of key OHS stakeholders, in multiple sectors and with an interest in engaging in research on specific issues related to RTW in NL. This project identified areas to further explore knowledge and opportunities.

Objectives

To lay the foundations for the development of a strategy to identify barriers to return-to-work for injured and ill workers and thereby enhance the safety of workers in Newfoundland and Labrador.

To bridge the research-to-practice gap between Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) research and for monitoring and improving OHS in the economy.

Background

Musculoskeletal and mental health concerns are the two leading causes of work disability. In Newfoundland and Labrador, rates have been declining, equivalent in rate to other provinces. Rates have not been observed.

Over the last decade, researchers have done a lot to support RTW, improve recovery after injury/illness? We've learned that there are many strategies that can be grouped into three categories: service coordination, and work modification. On its own has merit, the evidence is clear that a combination of elements from each category in the context and each worker's situation, works best.

Workplaces continue to face challenges. Societal changes are making it difficult to achieve. Workforce aging poses particular challenges. Older workers often take longer to RTW than younger workers. Precarious job arrangements also take a toll on employment.

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Discussion

The Leadership Roundtable resulted in enhanced understandings of current RTW issues in NL workplaces as well as possible action steps, including:

- a newfound awareness that early and safe return to work (ESRTW) regulations exist and that there is a legal responsibility for employers to accommodate.
- an identified need for improved communication of context-specific knowledge and understandings of the RTW process, the role of workplaces and workers in the process, and workplace/industry- and workforce-specific resources, information, and innovative and creative tools for successful RTW - and *stay* at work
- that mental health concerns in the workplace are pervasive, less understood, and important to recognize and address
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To bridge the research-to-practice gap in Occupational Health and Safety for monitoring and improving the economy.

Background

Musculoskeletal and mental health are the two leading causes of work-related injury and illness. In Newfoundland and Labrador, work-related injury and illness rates have been declining, equivalent rates have not been observed.

Over the last decade, research has been done to support RTW, improve recovery after injury/illness? We've learned strategies that can be grouped into three categories: service coordination, and work on its own has merit, the evidence combines elements from each context and each worker's situation.

Workplaces continue to face challenges. Societal changes are making it difficult to achieve. Workforce aging poses challenges as workers often take longer to RTW than younger workers. Precarious job arrangements also affect employment.

NL faces particular challenges, including a high prevalence of small and remote businesses, aging faster than in the rest of the province, and a high rate of disability and unemployment.

Conclusions

With the success of the Leadership Roundtable, we have begun the process of building and strengthening important connections between the university and the local OHS community as well as the process of facilitating multi-stakeholder dialogue aimed at a greater understanding of what we can do to help support RTW for musculoskeletal and mental health conditions.

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Leadership Roundtable Report? [View Roundtable.php](#)

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Working Together: Unpacking What Works in Return-To-Work

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SAFETY
ASSOCIATION



NL-FHSA
FISH HARVESTING
SAFETY ASSOCIATION



This work was funded through an award from the Public Engagement Accelerator Fund (Memorial University) awarded to Dr. Kim Cullen. kcullen@mun.ca

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