

Clerical workers tackle workload on-the-ground

Welcome to the fourth edition of *PaperWork* – the voice of HEU's clerical workers.

In this issue, we focus on workload as the union draws more attention to the health and safety component of this chronic problem in health care. The most recent issue of the *Guardian* features many OH&S stories and tips, and includes discussion on the impact overwhelming workloads has on our members.

Workload issues affect all clerical workers. And HEU members made that clear when they placed tackling workload as a top bargaining priority at their 2005 clerical conference.

The majority of clerical delegates reported that stress and mental health-related illness, low morale, decreased loyalty to employer, and constant rotation changes have resulted in increased sick time in their departments. And clerical staff say their workload has increased due to cutbacks and integrated job descriptions. Often, clerical workers skip their breaks – without claiming overtime – just to get everything done.

STRESS LINKED TO WORKLOAD

Members who filled out HEU's recent clerical survey reported that a whopping 94 per cent of respondents very rarely get relief when training new staff or practicum students, and yet 87.7 per cent are required to provide training or orientation several times a year. This is true for all job categories throughout the health authorities.

When workload is not addressed, it only gets worse. And no matter how hard you try, the work just keeps piling up.

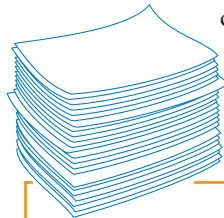
Workload is one of the major factors leading to on-the-job stress, which has become a serious problem in health care.

Employers often minimize the impact of stress on workers or treat it as a personal problem, or worse, a personal failure.

Some employers, however, may offer stress management courses – acknowledging there is a legitimate concern among workers.

Workplace stress is an organizational problem caused by unhealthy work environments and crushing workloads. The union's *Workplace anti-stress guide* offers helpful information on recognizing stress, managing it, and organizing workers to eliminate it.

To receive a copy of the *Workplace anti-stress guide*, you can download it from the HEU website or contact the Provincial Office at 604-438-5000 or toll-free at 1-800-663-5813. Also, watch for a clerical workload poster being distributed to locals this summer.



IS YOUR WORKLOAD A CHALLENGE?

Do you work overtime or are you asked to work overtime?

Do you skip your coffee breaks?

Do you eat lunch at your desk?

Do you go home with a pile of work still left on your desk?

Do you often feel stressed and fatigued?

Do you have a workload committee at your work site?

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

Do take care of yourself and **take all your breaks.**

Do go for a walk on your lunch and leave your work cares at the workplace.

Do give your workload back to the employer and ask them to prioritize it for you.

Do make your workload **the employers' responsibility.**

Do sign-up and serve on your OH&S committees.