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Re: Consultation Paper: Enhancing SIRA's Research Program

I commend SIRA for the consultative process they have embarked upon concerning their research priorities.

Health literacy is fundamental to navigating the health system. It is not unusual for a worker's first exposure to the health system to be via a workplace injury. Such a worker would be required to navigate a health system for the first time while also navigating the workers compensation process. Consequently, the interaction between the healthcare system and the workers compensation process could present a barrier for a worker with a compensable injury.

Superimposed upon the navigation issues associated with healthcare and injury Management is the issue that English is not their first language for many workers. Even if a worker has English language skills, they could have limited skills to navigate the health care system and thus, health literacy could be a barrier to their rehabilitation. Thus, access and health literacy should be considered from the perspectives of:

1. Recognition of the 2 separate but interacting layers of complexity (that is, the workers compensation system and the healthcare system) that present barriers for injured workers.
2. Additional barriers for those from non-English-speaking backgrounds with compensable injuries who must navigate both systems to manage their injuries to recovery.

Thus, and it is not obvious from the consultation paper, I would encourage investigations to improve an injured worker's capacity to navigate the workers compensation process and particularly, to target workers from non-English speaking backgrounds or with limited health literacy.

Finally, a worker's injury and return to work outcomes are critically dependent upon insurer Case management and specifically, the skills of their insurer Case Manager. I would encourage investigations to enhance the education of case managers, who often manage workers with complex issues and potentially limited health literacy. The worker's customer experience can only be enhanced by engagement with skilled case managers. If SIRA's research priorities are to be met (see p. 5; Section 2.2), the important role of case managers in each of the 8 listed priorities must be recognised and supported. Research to investigate case managers' needs and methods to improve their skills should be prioritised.

Yours Sincerely



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