Medical Evaluations for Museum and Collections Care Professionals
(Getting the most out of your healthcare evaluations)

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Please Note:
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Questions or comments, please contact: HealthandSafety@conservation-us.org
Outline

- Health & Safety Hazards in collections work?
- Assessing the hazards in your workplace
- Healthcare professionals
- Information for your healthcare professional
- What you can do now
Health and Safety Hazards in collections work?

- **Physical Hazards**
  - Ex: noise, cold, tools, old buildings, construction, ladders, fieldwork, etc.

- **Toxic Materials**
  - Inherent: asbestos, toxic plants, heavy metal pigments
  - Acquired: pesticides, preservatives
H&S Hazards in collections work?

Health and Safety information available?

Re: hazardous conditions and materials = GOOD
  - Well known hazards from industry, + some unique aspects

Re: rates of injuries/illnesses in Collections = BAD
H&S Hazards in collections work?

- **Special Issues in Collections Work**
  - Work in small groups
  - Health and Safety training = often limited
  - Capital for safety equipment = often limited
  - "The Show Must Go On" syndrome
    - Minimizing symptoms and safety measures to get the job done
Assessing hazards in your workplace

Information sources

- Person doing work
  - Best source for job activities

- H&S references for similar work
  - Museum articles, other workplaces

- Identification of hazardous materials
  - Labels
  - Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS)
Outline

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Healthcare professionals

No specialty for Collections professionals

Healthcare professionals;

- Often unprepared for work-related health concerns
- Training: generally little work-related health training
- You must educate your healthcare providers
  - Re:
    - Work
    - Exposures
    - Concerns
Healthcare professionals

- **Specialists**
  - Occupational/Environmental Medicine (OEM)
    - Work-related injuries and diseases
    - 3000 Board Certified OEM in U.S. (30,000 Cardiologists)

- **Resources for OEM specialists**
  - Association of Occupational Environmental Clinics (AOEC)
  - American College of Occupational Environmental Medicine (ACOEM)
Information for your healthcare professional

- Work duties
  - Ex: “Prepare cultural objects for storage”
  - Cleaning, repairing, supporting objects

- Materials used or encountered
  - Ex: glues, solvents, arsenic, pigments nearby formaldehyde work

- Unique aspects of work
  - Ex: very close work with materials,
  - eat/drink at workstation,
  - many hours in storage area
Concerns to Discuss with your Healthcare Professional

- **Acute episodes**
  - Ex: asthma, rash, dizziness while working with ____

- **Personal Health Issues**
  - Pregnancy
  - Underlying conditions. Ex. asthma, HIV, seizures,

- **Chronic exposures**
  - Ex: long periods of work with possible hazard

- **Health problem**
  - Is it associated with work exposures?
Healthcare Evaluation Outcome

Recommendations

- Further investigation
- Monitoring of exposures

- Monitoring of patient
  - Ex: blood, urine, x-rays, breathing tests, questionnaire
  - Ex: regular monitoring, when work changes,
  - Problems with this approach
What you can do now

- Identify your work hazards
  - E.g. physical hazards, fumes, dusts

- Investigate possible hazards and effects
  - E.g. silica dusts, ergonomic probs, pesticides

- Learn how to protect yourself
  - Eliminate, substitute, control, limit exposure,
  - Protect your skin/ eyes, respiratory system, mouth
  - Do not eat/ drink/ touch face at workstation
The End!