

1st International Symposium to Advance Total Worker Health™
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Dr. John Howard:

THROUGH WORK, we earn our daily bread and in doing so, we contribute to the continual advance of society. Work is one of the characteristics that distinguish us as human beings so work bears a particular mark of our humanity. Throughout the world, work contributes to our human dignity.

At the same time we acknowledge that workers throughout the world have a right to safe work, we recognize that every country's economic growth potential is dependent on workforce health, just as it is on innovation and capital investment.

Ensuring safe work for all workers is what we do. What brings us all here to this **1st International Symposium on Total Worker Health™** is the desire to do more for the worker than we do now.

Occupational safety and health professionals have concentrated on ensuring that work is safe, that workers are protected from the harms that arise from work itself. Identifying new work hazards, and new ways of controlling both old and new work-related hazards, has been our goal since the time of Ramazzini in the 15th century.

Yet, we have always realized that hazards that arise from outside of work can, surely as work itself, adversely affect a worker, her family, the enterprise for which she works, and the Nation. Hazards and habits experienced before and after work can affect our workability.

Preventing work-related injury and illness, rather than preventing worker injury and illness, has been our focus. Workforce health has been subdivided into two worlds—the world of work and the world of life—and occupational safety and health professionals have confined themselves, or been confined by others, to just the world of work.

My view is that this division of responsibility has not been good for workforce health, nor has it been for the profession of occupational safety and health whose aim should be broader, larger, more contributory for all our benefit.

Often, we have seen worker health promotion efforts take place in workplaces that are not providing safe and healthful working conditions—workplaces at which workers' health is not protected. That is not *Total Worker Health*.

Often, we have seen worker health promotion efforts taking place at workplaces in which the very way that work is organized and structured is actually contributing to worker injuries and illnesses, especially cardiovascular diseases, depression and anxiety. That is not *Total Worker Health*.

Often, we have seen worker health promotion efforts taking place at workplaces that are showcasing wellness programs of unproven value for workers' well-being and is completely disconnected from workforce protection. That is not *total worker health*.

But we know better.

We know that *Total Worker Health* is always in service to an already fully protected workforce.

We know that *Total Worker Health* means ensuring optimum well-being for workers through integration of state-of-the-art protection and promotion that has the workers' best interests as its motivating goal.

We know that *Total Worker Health* is promoting worker well-being in all its aspects, including appropriate indemnity and medical care for work injuries and illnesses, adequate paid sick and family leave, maternity and paternity leave, adequate vacation time, living wages, comprehensive health care, social pensions, along with safe and healthful workplace conditions as required by law.

We know that workplaces that show no organizational commitment to worker well-being, that lack the involvement of workers in ensuring their own safe work, that do a poor job at protecting workers from work hazards, cannot meet the goals of *Total Worker Health*.

We know that workplaces that are interested in wellness measures only in order to lower their health insurance costs, are not likely to be workplaces that can achieve *Total Worker Health*.

The World Health Organization challenges all of us when it says that "health is a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity."

Total Worker Health is more than the sum of its parts—protection and promotion—it is a synthesis of all aspects of health that create worker well-being.

Total Worker Health is an undertaking of significance. Melding two worlds that have uneasily co-existed for many, many years will not be an easy task, but *not* trying to meld those two worlds leaves us working on only one side of a two-sided problem. We can never succeed that way.

The work of ensuring protection will never be completely done, but, at the same time, as we continue to perfect that work, we strive to give workers more than they got from us before—we strive to ensure for them *Total Worker Health*.

Thank you for participating in the 1st International Symposium on Total Worker Health™. And, thank you for your efforts to ensure *Total Worker Health*.