



WINTER 2016 NEWSLETTER



Welcome to the winter newsletter for AHS. This year, along with my private practice I have been busy with additional studies, so my plan to finish my e-book got 'put on hold'. However, I promise it will eventually be written.

This newsletter is all about the theme **"Human Factors"**. It's probably not surprising to know that my current area of studies is on "Human Factors and Safety Management Systems". What I have enjoyed most about these studies, is being reminded of the heart and soul of what Occupational Therapy is about. You see, the studies of Human Factors and Occupational Therapy are both about optimizing human well-being and functioning, but not in isolation. We consider the person, AND the environment in which they live, work, and play.

What is 'human factors'?

According to the IEA (International Ergonomics Association)

Ergonomics (or human factors) is the scientific discipline concerned with the understanding of interactions among humans and other elements of a system, and the profession that applies theory, principles, data and methods to design in order to optimize human well-being and overall system performance. <http://www.iea.cc/whats/index.html>

It is a complex area of work given the ever changing variables involved. No two people are the same, and environments can vary dramatically. Add to that the interaction between people, and we have complexity.

In the world of "work", the purpose of human factors interventions is to reduce accidents and errors in the workplace, improve safety, improve worker comfort, improve worker wellbeing, and increase productivity. There are human and financial benefits when this is done well.

What are the key areas?

Central to the process is the **'person'**. We need to consider the physical and cognitive capabilities of the individual. Work processes, job tasks, equipment design etc. should all be developed with a thorough understanding of these human elements.

We also consider the 'organisational' elements such as systems and structures which guide and impact the work tasks. This may include policies and procedures.

And finally, let's not forget the environment. This may include the weather, people, infrastructure, equipment used etc.

It is about looking at WHAT is done, HOW it is done, WHY it is done, and by WHOM. Then applying the principles and theories of human factors, we can achieve the desired outcome of optimal performance.