



Partnership for **Work,**  
**Health** and **Safety**



# Asbestos-related Disease and Workers' Compensation



*Mieke Koehoorn*

*School of Population and Public Health*

*University of British Columbia*

[Mieke.koehoorn@ubc.ca](mailto:Mieke.koehoorn@ubc.ca)



October 1, 2012



a place of mind



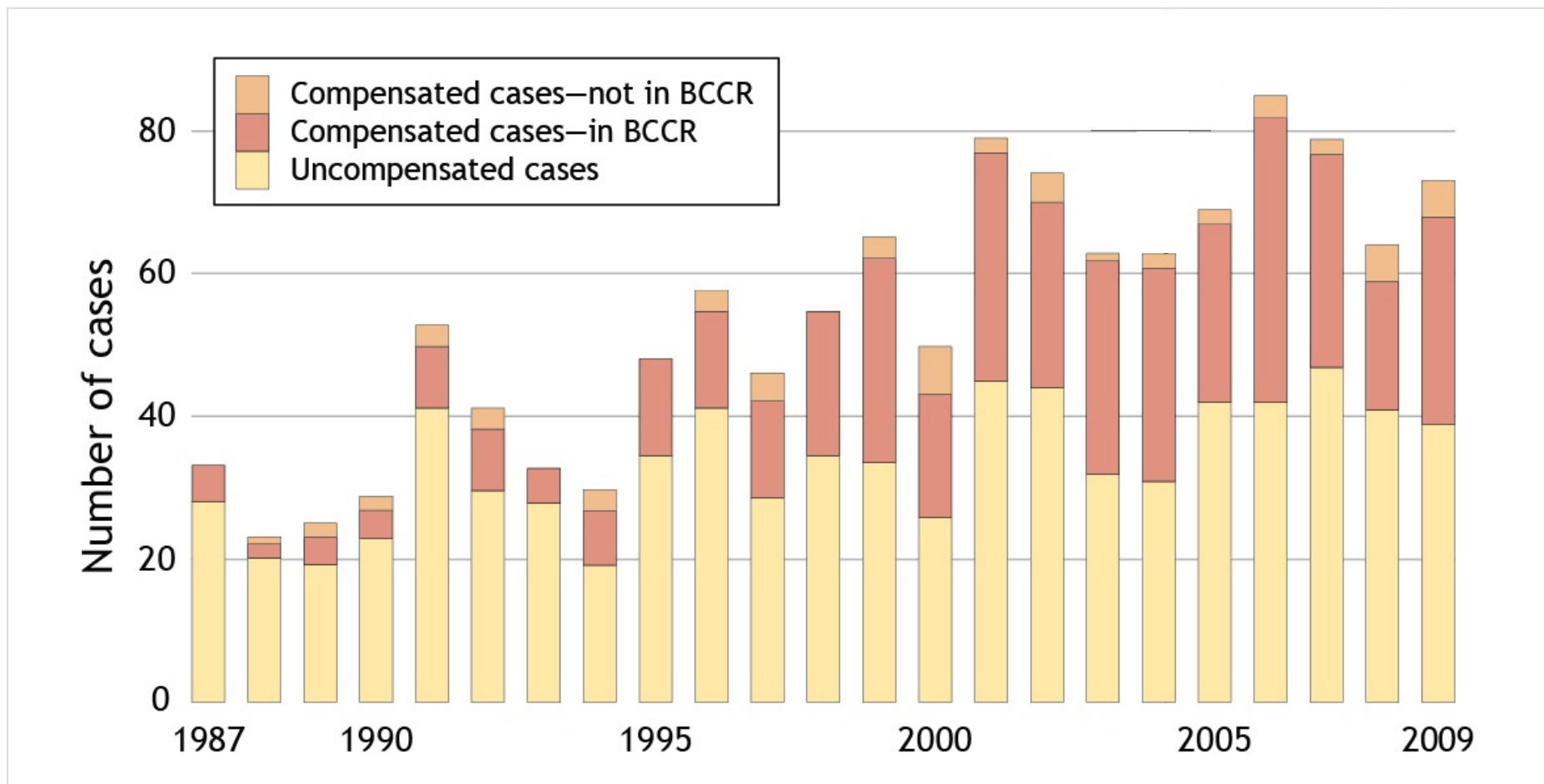
WORKING TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE

# Partnership for Work, Health and Safety

- Research agreement between UBC and WorkSafeBC
- Research (operating costs) funded by WorkSafeBC
- No restrictions on publication (but ask to review papers and presentations in advance)

# Mesothelioma and workers' compensation

Numbers of compensated and uncompensated cases in BC



# Mesothelioma and workers' compensation, BC

---

- 2007-2010 claims
- 144 of 148 mesothelioma claims were accepted (97%)
- 1 was directed to the Department of Veterans Affairs, 3 were suspended awaiting additional information
- ~4 claims per year compensated by Veterans Affairs

# Mesothelioma and workers' compensation

---

- Ontario, 43% filing rate over past 20 years
- Alberta, 42% filing rate over past 30 years
- Quebec, preliminary report even lower...
  
- France, 62% filing rate
- Australia, 65% filing rate

## Why workers' compensation matters....

---

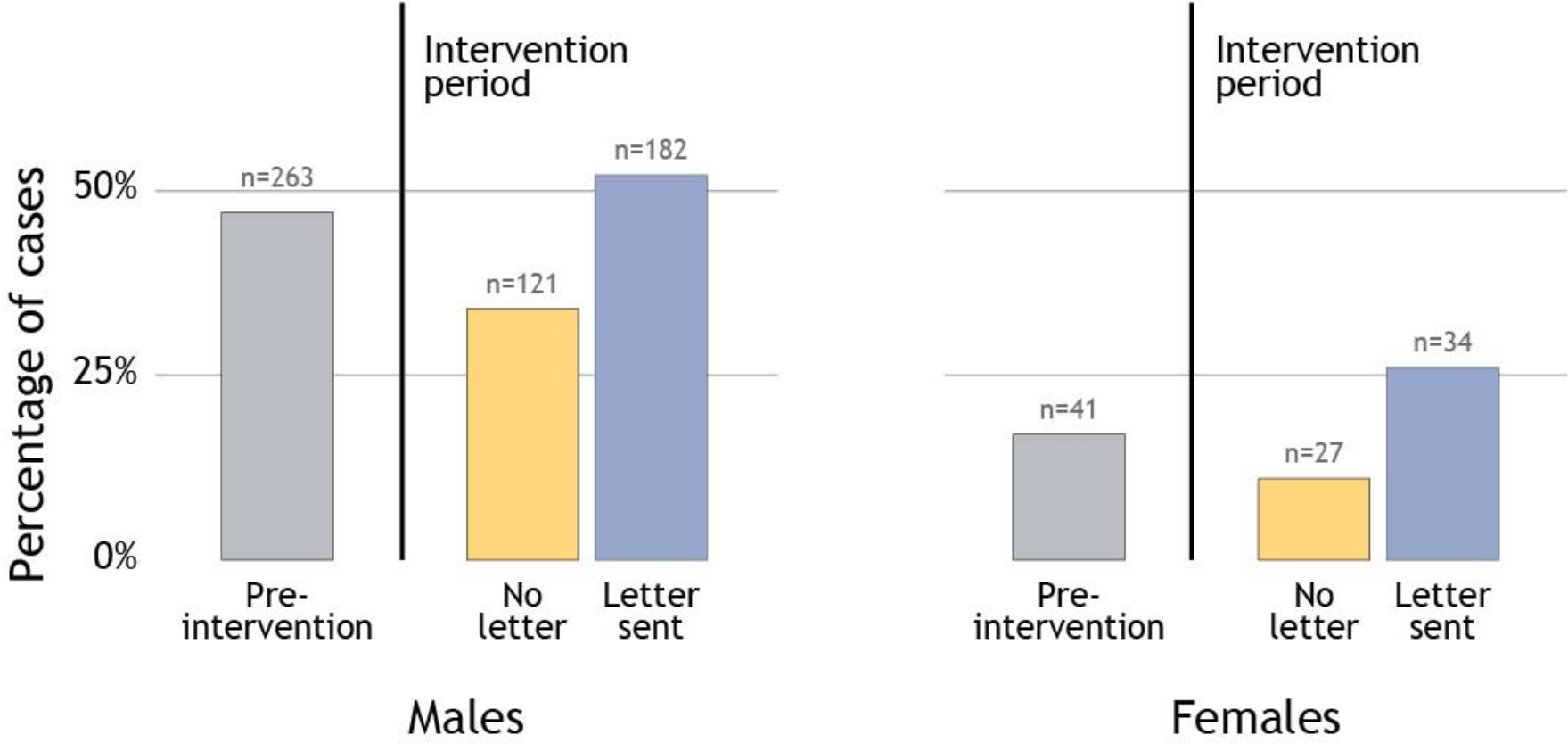
- Covers cost of diagnostics, drugs, treatment, care (including palliative care), equipment; payable to the worker, spouse, dependents or estate;
- Includes funeral expenses, grief counselling and, for surviving spouses /or dependents, monthly pensions and vocational assistance;
- Surveillance of occupational disease in Canada

## Compensated cases more likely to be.....

---

- Male (*8 times less likely for females*)
- (Older) working age (*2 times less likely <45, 5 times less likely >75 years*)
- Cancer of the pleura (*5 times less likely for peritoneum*)
- Workers from mining or other industrial regions of the province (*76% BC regions*)

# Proportion of cases compensated by WorkSafeBC, by gender and letter status 2000-2009





# Determinants of seeking compensation.....

## *interviews with patient/family*

---

*“So at this point I’m kind of relying on my doctor. He’s supposed to be the specialist. And [I] buffer everything else with what he has to say.”*

*“that really didn’t come up until I was handed the papers to fill out ... when my doctor gave me the papers, I guess he said that it’s a workplace disease, right.”*

- Individuals with mesothelioma and their families rely heavily on physicians as trusted sources of information for both medical and compensation-related issues;
- Not much use of other information sources
  - Internet resources consulted, but “overwhelming/scary”

# Patient/Family Member Interviews

---

*“Our absolute angel from WorkSafe” (sensitive claims consultant)*

*“The way this guy handled it, I don’t think he could have done it any better.”*

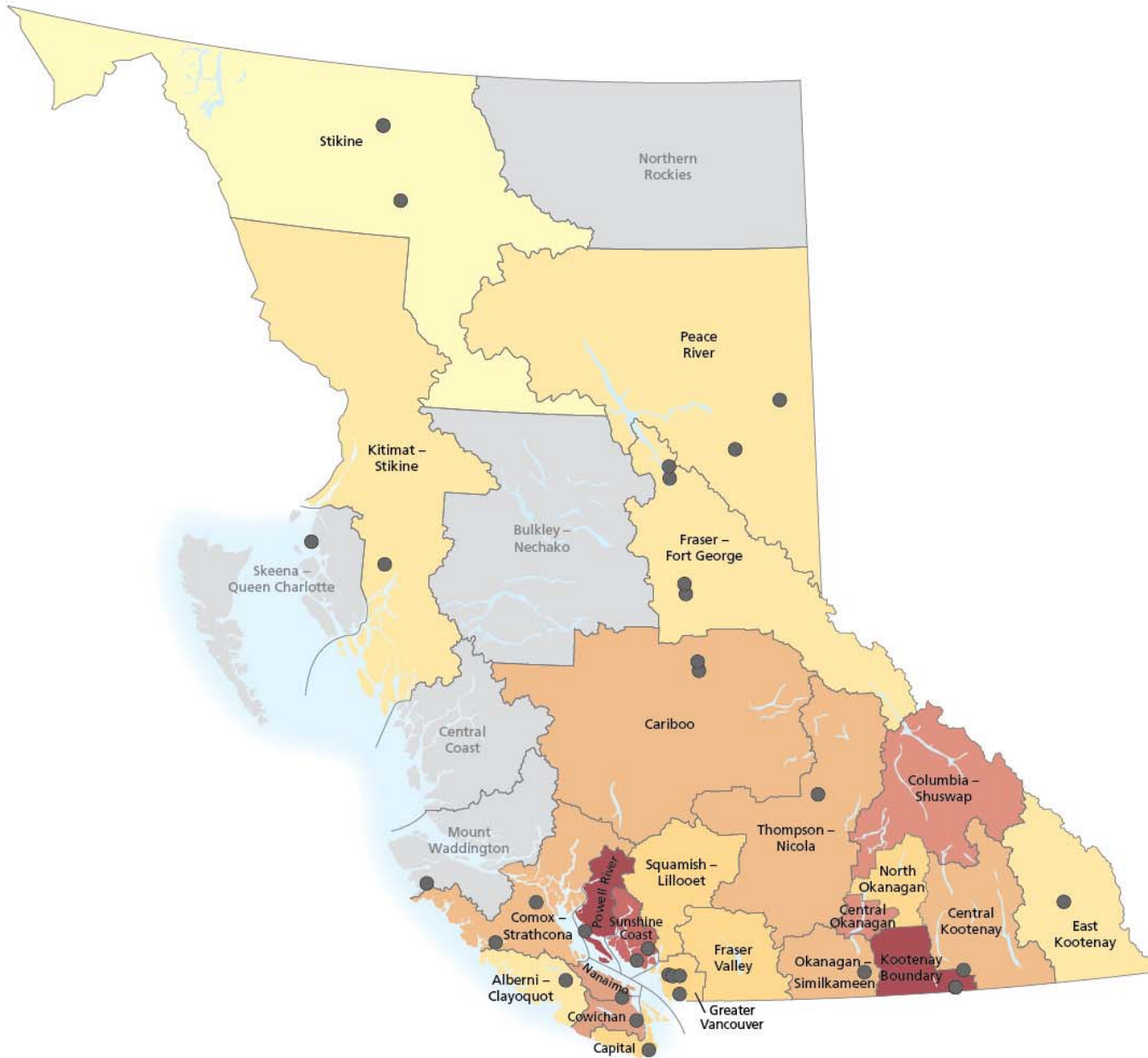
- Perceptions of complicated/bureaucratic procedures (and uncertainty) for filing a compensation claim by both physician and patients; but once they make contact a beneficial experience.....
- Most patients rely on an advocate to initiate the claim
  - This process seems to work most smoothly when the physician initiates the claim process

# Resources

---

- Sensitive Claims/Occupational Disease Department  
WorkSafeBC  
Tel: (604) 276-3156  
– *Dedicated resource person to help with claims*
- WorkSafeBC: <http://www.hiddenkiller.ca/>
- *Exposure Registry 2012?*

# Asbestosis in BC



**Incidence rate per 100,000 males and number of cases, 1995-2006**

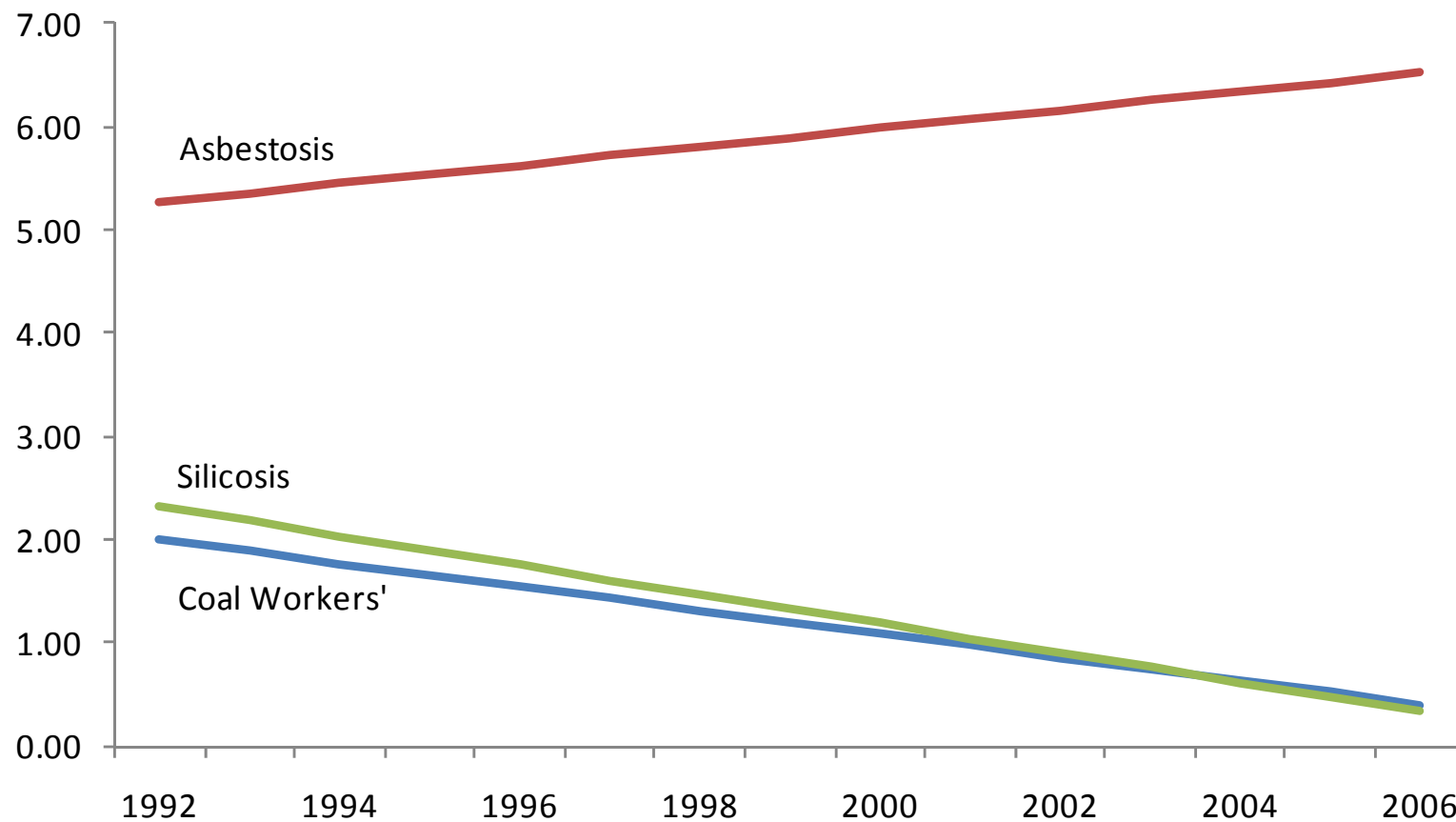
	No.	Rate
Kootenay–Boundary	26	202
Powell River	16	194
Sunshine Coast	19	164
Columbia–Shuswap	28	131
Central Okanagan	90	130
Nanaimo	66	112
Cowichan Valley	34	106
Okanagan–Similk.	33	99
Comox Valley	23	93
Thompson–Nicola	42	81
Cariboo	21	80
Central Kootenay	18	77
Fraser Valley	71	67
Capital	93	63
North Okanagan	19	59
Squamish–Lillooet	9	57
Greater Vancouver	509	56
East Kootenay	11	47
Alberni–Clayoquot	6	46
Fraser–Fort George	15	39
Kitimat–Stikine	6	38
Peace River	6	25

Rate not reported due to small number of cases (<4)

● Asbestos exposure sites

# Burden of asbestos-related disease

Incidence of asbestosis, CWP, and silicosis, males, 1992-2006



# Asbestos and Compensation:

---

*Burden of disease still on the rise (in BC)*

*Workers' compensation matters*

*Multiple determinants for filing a claim, but health care professionals/physicians matter*

# Partnership for Work, Health and Safety

[www.pwhs.ubc.ca](http://www.pwhs.ubc.ca)



a place of mind



WORKING TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE