

Research Project Details	
Title	Evaluating effectiveness of telerehabilitation services among injured workers in Alberta
Investigator(s)	Dr. Doug Gross, University of Alberta
Funding Period	2022-2023
Budget	\$40,602.00
Issue/Rationale	The COVID-19 pandemic resulted in dramatic changes to the delivery of health care services and rehabilitation world-wide. WCB-Alberta was ideally suited to implement telerehabilitation services to injured workers due to previous research conducted in the jurisdiction. All non-emergent assessment and treatment programs for injured workers in Alberta transitioned to remote delivery via telephone or videoconferencing. This project presents an important opportunity to examine these extraordinary circumstances and share the WCB-Alberta experience with other rehabilitation practitioners and compensation systems worldwide. Few other jurisdictions were able to transition so rapidly, and many are still seeking guidance on the ongoing use of telerehabilitation to help overcome several barriers to service delivery including inaccessibility, cost, and lack of transportation. If telerehabilitation is as effective as in-person services, sharing the WCB-Alberta experience will provide solutions to other jurisdictions and build confidence in delivering services via telerehabilitation.
Objective(s)	Our research objective is to evaluate the <i>pragmatic, “real-life” effectiveness</i> of telerehabilitation for promoting return to work (RTW) among injured workers using WCB-Alberta data. Workers undergoing telerehabilitation since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic will be compared to those receiving in-person or hybrid services.
Anticipated Results/ Impact	The expected outcome is improved understanding of the use of telerehabilitation among injured workers. We will describe and evaluate the ongoing, province-wide implementation of telerehabilitation by WCB-Alberta, which will provide important lessons for other jurisdictions. Beyond practical implications for WCB-Alberta, this study has important research implications as it will be the first large-scale, pragmatic evaluation of the effectiveness of telerehabilitation for injured workers using real-world data.
Keywords	Telerehabilitation, COVID-19, service delivery, evaluation, pandemic