

APEX Health Status of Executives in the Public Service of Canada - Backgrounder

In 1996 at the height of Program Review, 35 % of the executives in the Federal Public Service were downsized. Those who remained had the responsibility of carrying out the downsizing in their organizations while maintaining their operations.

The Ottawa Academy of Medicine acting on behalf of Family Practitioners in Ottawa, approached APEX about the significant number of senior executives they were treating in their practices. The rates for anxiety, depression and hypertension were of serious concern to them.

APEX created a support network for executives which immediately saw a large number of individuals under high levels of strain and stress which were affecting their health. The APEX Board of Directors decided that in order to address the situation, it needed to have a comprehensive understanding of the nature and scope of the health status of executives as well as attempt to determine which factors were most contributing to it.

They commissioned a group of researchers from three universities to conduct the 1997 study on the "*Work Habits, Working Conditions and Health Status of Executives in the Public Service of Canada*". This was the first ever large scale epidemiologic study on public sector executives and as such has served as a benchmark in the field. The results have been presented at a number of international scientific symposia and continue to be a key reference point for other research. (See http://www.apex.gc.ca/interest/synopsis_e.html for the synopsis report and findings)

Upon its release in 1998, the study generated a flurry of interest within and outside of the federal Public Service. In 1999 a two day colloquium, produced a document "*Beyond the Talk*" http://www.apex.gc.ca/interest/beyond_e.html which provided a series of recommendations on how to address the key factors identified in the research as influencing health outcomes. These activities on the part of APEX were a key stimulus for the Public Service wide Employee Survey which was conducted in 1999.

At the time of the colloquium, APEX committed to repeating the research every four or five years in order to measure progress towards improving the health of executives. Originally planned to be conducted in the fall of 2001, as a result of the events of September 11, the replication study was postponed until February 2002.

The second study replicates all of the major elements of the original, and expands on a number of areas which were identified in 1997 as worthy of further exploration. The research team has been expanded with a number of nationally and internationally known scientists from six renowned Canadian Universities and research institutes. The preliminary report on the 2002 study is available on the APEX web site www.apex.gc.ca.

