

Profile – Dr. Mana Rezai, HBSc, DC



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Research Associate

Institute for Work & Health, University of Toronto

Dr. Mana Rezai is a chiropractor and research associate at the Institute for Work & Health (IWH) who started a MHS in Epidemiology at the University of Toronto's Department of Public Health Sciences in September 2005.

Upon completion of her chiropractic training at the Canadian Memorial Chiropractic College (CMCC), in 2003, Dr. Rezai began working in both clinical practice and as a researcher at IWH contributing to a number of different projects. The Institute for Work & Health is an independent, not-for-profit organization whose mission is to conduct and share research with workers, labour, employers, clinicians and policy-makers to promote, protect and im-

prove the health of working people. The Institute has been providing research and evidence-based practical tools for clinicians, policy-makers, employees and managers since 1990.

The Institute maintains a strong research focus on factors that contribute to work-related soft-tissue illness, injury and disability. This breadth of research aims to inform both primary prevention efforts – programs, policies and initiatives to prevent work-related injury – and secondary prevention efforts – treatment and management programs to reduce disability and recurrence of work-related injury. In addition, IWH scientists examine the broader population-level work-health issues.

The Institute operates with the support of the Ontario Workplace Safety & Insurance Board (WSIB). In addition to this core funding, the Institute receives grants from funding agencies such as the Canadian Institutes of Health Research, the US National Institutes of Health and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. These competitive grants help to support research on work and health issues and the transfer of messages resulting from the research.

The Institute has formal affiliations with four universities: University of Toronto, University of Waterloo, McMaster University and York University. Its association with the university community and its access to workplaces and key sources of data has made it a respected training centre. Scientists, students and policy-makers from around the world have come to consult and study at the Institute over the last few years. They have made outstanding contributions to the Institute's research program, while gaining first-hand experience and vital connections to the work and health research community. (www.iwh.on.ca)

From the beginning of her work term at IWH Dr. Rezai has contributed to the bi-annual publication of *Linkages*. The purpose of *Linkages* is to critically review and disseminate the best available evidence in the area of soft-tissue injury to clinicians, workplaces, insurers and policy makers.

To date Dr. Rezai has co-authored 3 issues of the *Linkages*:

- 1) Furlan, A. and Rezai, M. A review of the effects of manipulation and mobilization for neck pain: One more reason to add exercise! *Linkages* Article No. 13, Summer 2004 Issue.
- 2) Rezai, M. and Furlan, A. Spinal manipulative therapy – No better, no worse than other treatments for low back pain: Where do we go from here? *Linkages* Article N0.14, Winter 2005 Issue.
- 3) Rezai, M. and Côté, P. Which came first – the depression or the pain? *Linkages* Article N0.15, Summer 2005 Issue.

Dr. Rezai has also contributed to several other projects including a review of the epidemiology of neck pain in workers which was conducted in collaboration with the 2000–2010 Bone and Joint Decade Task Force on Neck Pain and Associated Disorders. This work was headed by Dr. Pierre Côté who will be Mana's supervisor for her ensuing Master's Degree in Epidemiology at the University of Toronto.

For the past 25 years, the Graduate Department of Public Health Sciences and its predecessor, the Graduate Department of Community Health, offered two masters programs in epidemiology: the applied Master of Health Science (MHSc) specialization in Community Health and Epidemiology (CHE), and the Master of Science (MSc) in Epidemiology. The applied program was designed for those who had a public health orientation and wanted to work in an applied public health setting. The MSc in Epidemiology was intended primarily for those who wished to pursue a career in epidemiological research and/or proceed to a PhD. On July 1, 2004, these two programs were merged into a single degree program under the title of MHSc in Community Health and Epidemiology.

This merger explicitly recognizes that methodological and research content of the applied program had increased in response to the expressed needs of field practitioners and graduates. Quantitative methods, critical appraisal of evidence, and program monitoring and evaluation are of vital importance to evidence-based public health practice. At the same time, researchers need a broad understanding of issues in population health. Many graduates of the research program have pursued careers in public health field settings, applied research agencies, and government. Similarly, graduates of both programs

have gone on to pursue PhD studies and careers in academic research. Many Masters graduates (both MSc and MHSc) have gone on to studies in the health professions, particularly in faculties which emphasize research and evidence-based practice.

Overall, the intention of the new MHSc program is to provide a solid base in epidemiological methods, an understanding of the breadth of community health, and opportunities for applied experiential learning in evidence-based public health practice, research, and policy. In contrast to skills-based programs, this program is aimed at developing leaders who can make an independent contribution when faced with public health challenges, and lead new initiatives in the field.

The program objectives are achieved through a combination of required courses, practica, elective courses, and other learning experiences. Required courses provide a strong training in methods and a broad perspective on community health issues. A required practicum provides an opportunity for students to apply the skills they have learned in the classroom to a public health practice or research setting under the supervision of a qualified epidemiologist.

Within each student's study plan, the first two terms emphasize the required courses which provide core training and knowledge in epidemiological research methods, biostatistics, health care systems, critical appraisal of the literature, and descriptive epidemiology. (www.phs.utoronto.ca)

As a result of the affiliation between the University of Toronto and IWH, Mana will be able to complete her program requirements while continuing her work at IWH. Her future projects will include a study of the association between health-related quality of life and neck pain. This will entail a research project examining the influence of health-related quality of life on the course of neck pain within the population; more specifically, an examination of the relationship between life satisfaction and the course of neck pain.

As for her future career plans, Dr. Rezai hopes to pursue her research career while maintaining her clinical practice. To stay in touch with those who benefit from work like hers and to continue to draw inspiration for producing quality research in the area of musculoskeletal pain.