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Researchers Dan Bilsker (left), Joti Samra, Merv Gilbert and Martin Shain (not pictured) found that almost a third of B.C. workers are in psychologically unsafe and unhealthy work environments.

Research promotes workplace mental health by Susan Jamieson- McLaron

Thirty per cent of B.C. employees work in environments that are not psychologically safe and healthy, according to a new study by researchers from SFU's Consortium for Organizational Mental Healthcare (COMH; <http://www.comh.ca/>), a health sciences faculty national research centre.



The guide includes user-friendly assessment tools, an online survey, a risk "report card" and ways to measure progress and outcomes.

The researchers—Joti Samra, Merv Gilbert, Martin Shain and Dan Bilsker—have developed *Guarding Minds @ Work: A Workplace Guide to Psychological Safety & Health*. It's the first Canadian evidence-based guide to give employers comprehensive ways to assess and promote psychological safety and health in the workplace.

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"Everyone who worked on this project understands the realities of Canadian business and the importance of transforming research into practical tools for a Canadian business environment," says Samra, an adjunct professor and scientist with COMH.

Case law and legislation were an important consideration, notes Shain, also an adjunct professor. "Mental health is an integral part of workplace safety and health. The duty to provide a psychologically safe workplace is emerging as an ethical and legal obligation for Canadian employers."

The project, which involved national and international consultation, was commissioned by the Great-West Life Centre for Mental Health in the Workplace and funded by Great-West Life through its corporate citizenship program.

"Mental health issues pose a direct impact to the bottom line of Canadian businesses," says Mike Schwartz, executive director of the centre and a senior vice-president at Great-West Life.

"But there were very few resources for employers to assess the psychological safety and health of their own workplaces."

Guarding Minds @ Work is available online at no charge at <http://www.guardingmindsatwork.ca/>.

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