

New Paths, New Travelers

Matthew Keifer, MD MPH



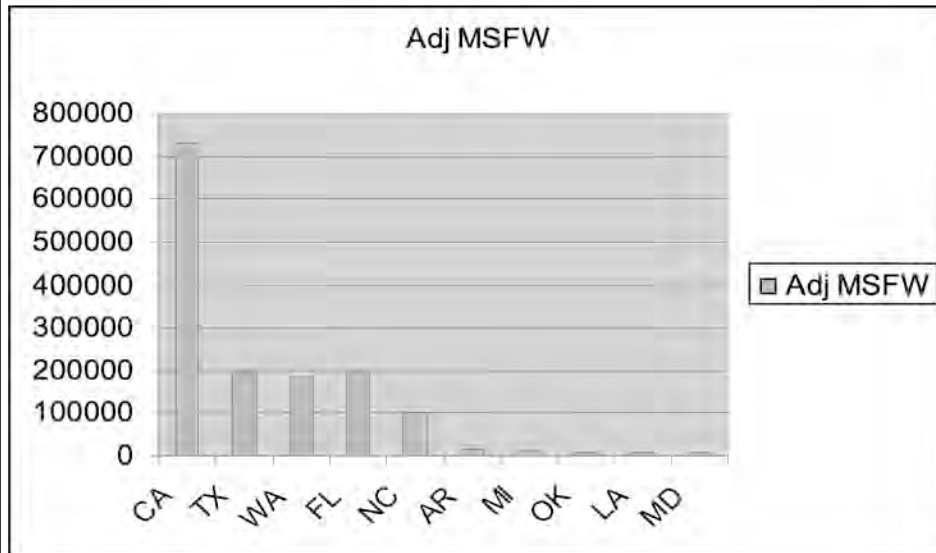
PACIFIC NORTHWEST
AGRICULTURAL SAFETY
AND HEALTH CENTER

New Paths Conference, Cle Elum, Washington
November 11, 2008

Migration for Work World Wide

- ILO estimates that there are were 191 million migrant workers in 2005
- US. In 2003 immigrants made up 14% of the US workforce.
- About half of the increase in the US labor force during the late 1990s was accounted for by immigrant workers

Farmworkers In US



Adapted from Larson A Larson Assistance Services Inc 2000

Who Does the Work of Food Production?

- Between 1 and 3 million hired farmworkers in the U.S.
- ~1/3 of the farm labor work force
- ~80% are immigrants
- ~50% undocumented
- Indigenous farmworkers are arriving in the West in increasing numbers

The Sad Fact

- We depend on misfortune to build up our force of migratory workers and when the supply is low because there is not enough misfortune at home, we rely on misfortune abroad to replenish the supply.

- President Harry S. Truman, 1951

Why They Come

“In Veracruz, things weren’t going well.

The people were killing themselves working the ranchos on the outskirts. The fishermen couldn’t catch enough protein from the sea. The cane cutters couldn’t cut enough cane. The small peasant farmers couldn’t get good enough prices to cover the costs of planting and harvesting their coffee.”..

“You’d think that at least there would be beans to eat, but the great Mexican Bean-growing industrial farms sold much of their crop to the United States”

Devil’s Highway L.A. Urrea. New York 2004

Why They Come

- 16.6 Billion dollars transferred to Mexico's Central Bank in 2004 (up 24%) from 2003
 - The Beaumont Enterprise Angela Macias
- “Men came home from the United States in cars. Some even had the latest models...They had their trunks and backseats full of old TVs, radios, clothes, toys. They built cement block additions to their tumbledown houses, added aluminum to the thatch roofs.”
 - The Devil's Highway, Urrea L.A. 2004
- Past and continuing repression of Indigenous peoples in the Americas
 - Honduras, Guatemala, Mexico, El Salvador

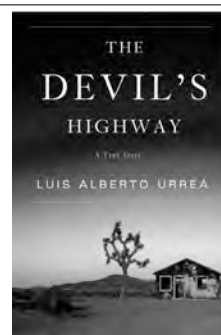
The Risks They Face In Coming

“In 2007, the bodies of 400 persons who died while crossing the US-Mexico border in search of better economic opportunities were recovered. The leading causes of death were heat stroke, dehydration, and hypothermia.”*

“From 1990-2005...the PCMEO examined 927 UBC recovered bodies, which, according to the U.S. Government Accountability Office account for at least 78% of the unprecedented increase in known UBC deaths along the entire southwest border of the United States

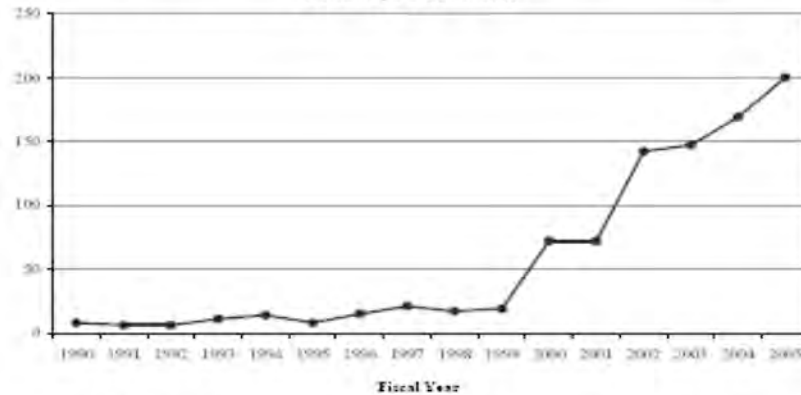
Dying to work: The risks from injury and death on the migrant's journey to work in the United States Liebman A, Migrant Clinicians Network APHA 2008

"Funnel Effect" and recovered bodies of unauthorized migrants in Arizona Ribio-Goldsmith R. APHA 2008



Pima County Medical Examiners Office

Figure 1: Bodies of Undocumented Border Crossers Examined by PCMEO, FY 1990-2005



Source: David E. Kelly-Gilbert, et al. "The 'Pased Regis' and Immigrant Deaths of Unsanitized Hispanics," October 2004 (Graph 1)

Workplace Injury

- 1991 Rosenstock and Demers identify significant increased risk for injury and illness among Washington farmworkers*
- Immigrant Day laborers had an estimated five times the injury rate as the construction industry Seattle**
- Latino work death rate is 25% higher than the average in US***
- This is a long standing trend true of immigrant groups in general***

*Demers P, Rosenstock L. , Am J Public Health. 1991

**Seixas N et al. Am J Ind Med 2008

**Death on the Job AFLCIO 2008

Workplace Illness

- Seixas et al. found that immigrant day laborers are twice as likely to be exposed to hazards as non-immigrant day laborers.
- Both Villarejo and Farquhar found a high rate of pesticide complaints among farm workers in their respective states
- Both found high rates of musculoskeletal complaints including back problems
- Farquhar also found that indigenous farmworkers rated their health more poorly



© www.earldotter.com

Housing

- Washington State farmworkers:
 - 40% Severe or moderately substandard housing
 - 23% Rodent infestation
 - 17% No heat
 - 12.5% Poor water quality
- Oregon Farmworkers:

Also repeatedly mentioned during the focus groups was a general lack of sanitation and potable water. Farms are required to provide drinking water, toilets, and hand-washing facilities, but these amenities are often absent. When water is provided, participants mentioned that it is sometimes not potable, yet the workers drink it because they lack other options. Farquhar S et al 2008

Why They Stay

- Leaving means potential loss of house and possessions
- Not going home means not having to come back
 - Returning is not easy, and getting in has become progressively harder
- Extended families with U.S. citizen dependents often present*

*Hagan J US deportation policy, family separation and circular migration. IMR V42:1, 2008

New Travelers

- We have become comfortable with our Spanish speaking workforce in agriculture
- Between 10 and 30 % of California seasonal farmworkers are Indigenous, largely Mixteco speaking*
- 5% overall and 23% of Western Washington Farmworkers were found to speak indigenous languages**
- 60-65% of forestry product workers on the Olympic Peninsula are indigenous (Guatemalen and Mexican)***

Indigenous Central Americans increasingly fill ranks of farmworkers *Last updated August 15, 2008*
MANUEL VALDES, THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

**Washington State Farmworker Housing trust

***Lesley Hoare and Joe Campe, personal communication

Washington State Counties



Indigenous Workers Face New Issues

- Indigenous farmworker's experienced disrespect and discrimination
- They felt they were facing unsafe working conditions.
 - Largely due to lack of understandable information on safety and lack of safety equipment
 - 13% could not sufficiently understand oral Spanish
 - 40% could not read Spanish*
- 18% of Non-English speaking Washington farmworkers neither spoke nor wrote Spanish**
- Indigenous workers-often undocumented, are subject to the added stress of immigration issues

*Farquhar S et al.
Washington State Farmworker Housing Trust

Going Home Injured

- H2A visa holders in Washington
 - Has encouraged collaboration with Mexican physicians
 - Worker Compensation system has connected with some physicians
 - Getting continuity of care to indigenous workers who return may pose a particular challenge

What Is Their Community

- Sometimes coherent, and interdependent
 - Sometimes unstructured and dispersed
 - Often fearful and elusive
 - Avoid contact with authorities
 - They may not know what a university researcher is
 - In a study of 11 pesticide applicators only 5 knew what the University of Washington was
- Cox I, unpublished data 2008

How to Reach Them to do Research

- How do you find those who don't want to be found?
 - Villarejo and McCurdy. The California Agricultural Workers Health Study
 - Fahuquar et al. Promoting the Occupational Health of Indigenous Farmworkers
 - Washington State Farmworker Housing Trust
 - Hoare L, Campe J, Keifer M, Forest Product Workers on the Olympic Peninsula.

A Chilling Effect

- ICE has stopped 41,000 people at roadblocks in Washington State
- 81 undocumented immigrants taken into custody
- 0.19% of those stopped were undocumented
- The rest were just angry
- “At what point does it not feel like America anymore?” Dan Fazio (Seattle PI Nov 10, 2008)

A Chilling Effect

- Due to ICE roadblocks we are unable to safely conduct focus groups among forestry workers on the Olympic Peninsula.
- Undocumented workers stay off the main roads
- What effect is this having on the already dangerous forestry activities?

What Can We Do? Unanswered Still

- “Doing this research will require new study paradigms including working with experts from multiple disciplines familiar with immigrant communities”*
- Indigenous workers may not have a context for understanding research
- Meet their needs as you do the research**
- Expand our knowledge and connections with indigenous workers
- Approach communities as communities, learn the social structure
- Increase cross border contact with professionals and researchers
- Take advantage of the new technology
 - Use visual based interview techniques
 - initiatives of the new administration
 - Internet conferencing, telemedicine.

*Schenker M, Occup. Env Med 65: 2008

** Hoare L et al unpublished

New Travelers



What is Coming? Obama Policy Statement

Secure our borders:

- preserve the integrity of our borders
- support additional personnel, infrastructure, and technology on the border and at our ports of entry.

Improve our immigration system:

- fix the dysfunctional immigration bureaucracy
- increase legal immigration to keep families together and meet the demand for jobs that employers cannot fill.

Bring people out of the shadows:

- Support a system that requires undocumented immigrants who are in good standing to pay a fine, learn English, and go to the back of the line for the opportunity to become citizens.

Technology and the Near Future

Obama has promised:

- Broad Band internet for all Americans
- A technology Czar or Chief Technology Officer

Is Change Coming? Only if We Insist

- Website: No comment about worker health and safety
- Connect with the new administration to insist on increases in support of intervention and research on occupational health and safety
 - Specifically Increased support for NIOSH and OSHA
 - Undo the damage done by the Bush Administration
- Insist on the ratification and adherence to the UN International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families