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MEDIA RELEASE

Brave soles? Study looks to prevent foot pain in standing workers

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Photo: <http://at.sfu.ca/uRtSZh>

People whose jobs require standing all day have a greater risk of plantar foot pain. Researchers at SFU's Surrey campus are working with WorkSafeBC and Kintec, a Surrey-based footwear and custom orthotics company, to develop a new insole that will differentiate workers' weight bearing behavior. The research aims to better understand whether standing is a risk factor for foot pain.

"Plantar fasciitis (PF) is a painful and disabling condition that is difficult to treat in workers who have to stand for prolonged periods of time, and it results in reduced productivity and lower quality of life," says lead researcher Carolyn Sparrey, a professor in SFU's School of Mechatronic Systems Engineering, and one of several SFU researchers embedded in Surrey's Innovation Boulevard.

The research also has support from the B.C. Nurse's Union and London Drugs. "Plantar fasciitis is overwhelmingly the most common condition that our clinicians see at Kintec, and we frequently hear it is associated with standing for prolonged periods of time," says co-investigator Michael Ryan, director of research and development at Kintec, and an adjunct professor in SFU's Department of Biomedical Physiology and Kinesiology (BPK).

"It is shocking to me that there still does not exist sufficient evidence to suggest prolonged weight bearing places workers at a greater risk of developing foot pain - but we are excited to be developing a tool that can finally answer this question."

Quantifying the amount of time spent weight-bearing at work varies substantially across different jobs and work sites, and current measurement methods are unreliable, resource intensive or unsuitable for the work environment, Sparrey notes.

The WorksafeBC project is part of an ongoing collaboration between SFU's School of Mechatronics Systems Engineering and Kintec in pursuit of purpose-built instrumented, or 'smart', insoles that will provide needed innovation to the US\$1.2B North American foot orthotic market.

Sparrey heads SFU's Neurospine Biomechanics Lab, where she is also developing tools to prevent and manage neurospine injuries and diseases. Her newest research team will be recruiting participants from the local Surrey community early in the new year.

ABOUT SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY:

As Canada's engaged university, SFU is defined by its dynamic integration of innovative education, cutting-edge research and far-reaching community engagement. SFU was founded 50 years ago with a mission to be a different kind of university,

to bring an interdisciplinary approach to learning, embrace bold initiatives, and engage with communities near and far. Today, SFU is Canada's leading comprehensive research university and is ranked one of the top universities in the world. With campuses in British Columbia's three largest cities, Vancouver, Burnaby and Surrey, SFU has eight faculties, delivers almost 150 programs to over 35,000 students, and boasts more than 150,000 alumni in 130 countries around the world.

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