



WORLD LEADING RESEARCH INTO COMPUTER USE RELEASED AT INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

Media release, 6 December 2007, Christchurch, New Zealand:

Christchurch based software developer Wellnomics Ltd has achieved a world first with the release of an analysis of the behaviour of nearly 50,000 computer users across 95 organisations in Europe, North America and Australasia.

Wellnomics managing director Dr Kevin Taylor recently returned from presenting the research findings at the world's foremost conference for research into RSI (also known as musculoskeletal disorders or MSD's) - PREMUS 2007 held in Boston, USA.

Data presented by Dr Taylor included some surprising revelations about computer use that challenge previously held ideas about how long we spend on our computers at work.

The Wellnomics data indicates that in past studies based on self reporting, computer users have consistently over estimated the amount of time they spend on the computer at work each day.

Observational studies have shown that self reports are inaccurate by 40% - 100%, almost exclusively on the higher side of the equation, according to Dr Taylor.

The Wellnomics data is based on 'odometer' software installed in the computers of workers in the study to record keystrokes, mouse clicks and time at the computer, and has been demonstrated by observational studies to be highly accurate.

"Our data indicates that on average workers use their computers just 12.4 hours per week or 2.4 hours per day over a five day working week," Taylor said.

Only 12% of users had average computing use exceeding 20 hours per week, with less than 1% exceeding 30 hours per week.

"It seems that we all spend less time working at our computers than we imagine," Taylor says, "and in fact, those few people who recorded more than 30 hours a week on the computer were working well beyond standard business hours to achieve those levels."

Other data collected in the research included which applications were used the most, and which types of computing users spent the most time doing.

No surprises to learn that email took up the biggest chunk of time at 28%, with internet browsing following in second place at 18% and word processing 15%.

Taylor says one of the most important areas of discussion he believes will emerge from the study is around the guidelines set by governments and corporations for safe amounts of computer usage.

"Currently we have guidelines set at around 5 - 6 hours per day in various countries, based on the self-reporting studies which have now been found to be inaccurate.

"The reality is that the current level of injuries is coming from far lower levels of computer use than first thought.

"If we are seeing high incidences of computer related RSI with average work computer use of only 2.4 hours per day, then new guidelines need to be developed urgently."

Another conclusion Taylor wants to highlight is that mouse usage is more important than the number of keystrokes as an indicator of risk.

"The fact that the rates of mouse usage are high, and the number of keystrokes is relatively low, supports the scientific consensus that it is not repetitive actions like typing that are the major cause of RSI amongst computer users, but actually static posture and muscle tension that causes problems, especially that required by using a mouse.

"Of course this study only covers the work environment, and we have no record of home computer usage, which anecdotally we would expect to be climbing as browsing websites, talking via instant message sites, loading music and viewing downloaded podcasts, movies and television clips becomes more and more common as an alternative to television watching at home."

Other information provided by the research indicates some significant differences between countries in terms of computer use, with UK users putting in the most hours on the computer (16.8 per week) and also the highest number of keystrokes per hour of computer use. Following behind the UK are the US and Australia with 14.5 and 13.6 hours per week respectively.

Norway and the Netherlands had lower numbers per week, but this might possibly be attributed to there being more part time office workers in both countries. The number of keystrokes per hour in the Netherlands was third behind the UK and Australia.

The New Zealand sample used was not large enough to be included in the comparison of countries.

The Wellnomics odometer data is derived from its WorkPace breaks and exercises software that is used by more than 1.2 million computer users worldwide. The data is expected to be used by a range of organisations, including LogiTech in the development of new keyboard and mouse designs, and Dutch research institute TNO have already incorporated information from the data into new algorithms developed for the Wellnomics Risk Management software.

Wellnomics has a strong focus on research in the office ergonomics field, and is the only New Zealand company represented on the US based research funding organisation, the Office Ergonomics Research Committee (OERC). The company has a research partnership with the Netherlands based TNO Work and Employment Institute and provides software research tools to many researchers in the office ergonomics field across Europe, North America and Australasia.

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About Wellnomics

Founded in 1997 by directors Dr Kevin Taylor and Dr Rob van Nobelen, Wellnomics® is a leader in the health and safety field, with many thousands of clients across North America, Australasia and Europe and over 1.2 million software product licenses in use worldwide. Clients include Global 1000 organisations such as Philips, Boeing, Chevron, Shell, BP, ING Bank, KPMG, PWC, Pacific Gas and Electric, Cap Gemini, Nike, and Eli Lilly.

Wellnomics provides an integrated suite of software tools to enable organisations to effectively manage the health and safety of large numbers of office workers. WorkPace and Wellnomics Risk Management products are designed to prevent injuries, improve productivity, and minimise lost work time, and are underpinned by extensive international research.

Wellnomics is an active, contributing member of elite computer industry research organization, the OERC (Office Ergonomics Research Committee) which includes IBM, Microsoft, Dell, Apple, Intel, HP, Herman Miller and LogiTech.

At any one time Wellnomics Ltd is involved with numerous scientific studies on computer use in the office environment around the world. These activities allow Wellnomics Ltd to make a measurable improvement to health and safety outcomes and provide clients with tangible returns on investment. For more information visit www.wellnomics.com

About PREMUS:

PREMUS is an international scientific conference that serves as a forum for work-related musculoskeletal health research with an emphasis on

prevention of work-related musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs). The participants include international experts in the field, including scientists, practitioners in occupational health and safety, ergonomists, economists, industrial engineers, and policy makers. The goal of PREMUS is to present and discuss the latest research. All keynote speakers are by invitation only and are recognised for their leadership and their international expertise. All presentations go through a peer review process ensuring high quality of research. As a result, PREMUS is the premier conference for work-MSDs.

Over the past 20 years, PREMUS has been organised every three years. PREMUS 2007 was the first time the conference was held in the United States.

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