



## Wellnomics Risk Management Ergonomics Software Addresses Computer Use Injuries

*Press release, 18 July, 2007, Wellnomics Ltd, New Zealand: Wellnomics Ltd, creator of the popular WorkPace Breaks & Exercises software, has launched a new 'whole health' approach to workplace ergonomics by introducing Wellnomics Risk Management software to the North American Oil and Petroleum industry.*

Wellnomics Risk Management is a new suite of software modules that for the first time gives employers the tools to look at the bigger picture in avoiding workplace injuries and downtime.

According to Wellnomics Ltd Managing Director Dr Kevin Taylor, Wellnomics Risk Management is the first scientifically validated product to cover all the known risk factors for MSDs (musculoskeletal disorders).

"It provides a unique combination of direct measurement of computer use and user self-assessment, as well as providing the tools to assist those with existing MSDs," he said.

The Wellnomics software automatically monitors computer use on each employee's PC then combines this information with data from a set of online questionnaires completed by the computer user covering posture and workstation ergonomics, existing symptoms and stress.

A personalized risk report then provides feedback to each computer user, with a list of recommendations and advice on how to reduce their risks.

The result is accurate identification of high risk employees within the organization, and a list of the top risk factors that need to be addressed to reduce risks to safe levels.

Not only does the new software identify at risk employees, it also trains and assists them to reduce risk; tracks the effectiveness of the risk management program and ultimately improves productivity and therefore the bottom line by reducing fatigue and discomfort.

Wellnomics Ltd has over 1 million users of its software worldwide, and works with the world's largest Oil and Petroleum companies including Chevron, Exxon Mobil, BP and Shell. The company recently appointed a North American Vice President to focus on the Oil and Petroleum sector within North America.

Trevor Foster joined Wellnomics from Australasian company Adilam Electronics Ltd and is handling direct sales for the Wellnomics Risk Management product in North America. His expertise in international markets and ability to rapidly address the challenges of implementing organizational change around Health and Safety will be invaluable in his new role.

The high cost of computer use injuries in the Oil and Petroleum industry is already well documented, as are the financial and 'whole health' benefits of implementing a preventative, holistic approach to the problem.

Oil giant Chevron was seeing the incidence of MSDs growing by 67% over a five year period, despite efforts to reduce injuries among office workers. Over 40% of all injuries in the company were due to MSDs.

With the assistance of Wellnomics, Chevron implemented a MSD prevention plan which initially diagnosed 30% of employees as being at high risk. The results of the program were impressive, with the number of people at risk of MSD dropping 30% across the company between 2000 and 2002. Injuries are also less severe, with the average number of days lost per MSD injury dropping by 50% between 2001 and 2002, and the cost per claim dropping by up to 50%.

Recent research is indicating that "binge computing" behavior is also a much more significant factor in the development of MSD than previously imagined.

Binge computing describes long periods of intensive computer use, often without breaks of any kind, in order to meet deadlines, produce university level papers, or create business presentations under time pressure.

It is compounded by the stress of those situations, which can often result in a serious case of MSD being triggered, which then makes the user far more vulnerable to future overuse injuries.

Dr. Benjamin Amick, from the University of Texas School of Public Health, coined the phrase to address one of the problems with computer-related injuries: working at the computer for an extended time without adequate breaks.

His research on university students has shown a strong correlation between binge computing and MSD injuries, especially when the semester end nears, along with deadlines for term papers. Surprisingly, the impact of mouse usage is actually more significant than keyboard usage as a source of injury.

Amick's research has been backed up by the fact that many organizations, including those in the Oil and Petroleum industry, are finding their newly minted graduates suffering from symptoms of MSDs within months of taking on their first job.

Continual demand to deliver projects and work to tight deadlines are the trigger points for MSD symptoms to become apparent or worsen. It is unlikely that the high incidence of discomfort among these new hires is caused purely by the immediate demands of the new position, but rather by a pre-existing injury caused by the 'binge computing' during university study. Employees may not be aware they have an injury until the problem worsens significantly due to the demands of their new position.

Dr Taylor stresses that the Wellnomics Risk Management tools are designed to provide all the necessary information and tools to best manage those valuable employees.

"We are doing business in a world where there is a shortage of skilled workers in many sectors, and every step we can take to reduce staff turnover and increase the overall wellbeing of employees is a valuable investment," he said.

The advantages of adopting a Wellnomics Risk Management work environment include reduced injury rates; increased productivity; reduced stress levels; reduced absenteeism; lowered ergonomic assessment costs and assured compliance with health and safety obligations.

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## **About Wellnomics**

Founded in 1997, Wellnomics Ltd is a leader in the health and safety field, with many thousands of clients across North America, Australasia and Europe and over 1 million software product licenses in use worldwide. Clients include Global 1000 organizations including Philips, Boeing, Chevron, Shell, BP, ING Bank, KPMG, PWC, Pacific Gas and Electric, Cap Gemini, Nike, and Eli Lilly.

Wellnomics Risk Management is an integrated suite of software tools to enable organizations to effectively manage the health and safety of large numbers of office workers. Wellnomics Risk Management software is designed to identify at risk employees; train and assist them to reduce risk; track the effectiveness of the risk management program and ultimately improve productivity and therefore the bottom line. The software is underpinned by extensive international research, led by Wellnomics Directors Dr Robert van Nobelen and Dr Kevin Taylor.

Wellnomics is an active, contributing member of elite computer industry research organization, the OERC (Office Ergonomics Research Council) 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](http://www.wellnomics.com).

**For further information regarding this press release please contact:**

Ali Wilkinson  
Marketing Director  
Wellnomics Ltd  
Tel: + 64 3 365 3040  
Email: [media-enquiries@wellnomics.com](mailto:media-enquiries@wellnomics.com)

Karen Brown or Shelley Grell  
Communicate IT Ltd  
Ph + 64 3 381 6655  
Mobile: + 27 339 0051  
Email: [karen@communicateit.co.nz](mailto:karen@communicateit.co.nz)