

Newsletter – Spring/Summer 2023

I cannot believe that it is nearly June, and we are all still waiting for the healing powers of the sun.

So far 2023 has been very productive, working with our key stakeholders and OH nursing colleagues to sustain, engage and inform. We continue to work with the government cross-Departmental Work and Health Unit and the HM Treasury on several working groups to market occupational health, promote occupational health nursing as a career, provide training & skills development and improve quality. We are taking every opportunity to promote the FOHN and OH nursing by attending events, forums, and engagement meetings, as well as keeping everyone up to date via the media, social media, and other communication channels.

This edition of the newsletter is being brought to you during mental health awareness week. This is a great time to engage with all the resources being promoted far and wide, to review the evidence and consider the tools that are being offered to include in your practice. We also have a **Feature** by one of our Board members, Alison Margary, on Understanding and Controlling Workplace Health Risks, which hopefully will encourage you to engage with the topic and our occupational hygiene colleagues for the benefit of employers and employees. FOHN is pleased to support the mentoring programme offered by the National School of Occupational Health and the Society of Occupational Medicine which is detailed in our **News Round Up**. There is also the usual additional information on occupational health resources and CPD opportunities.

At FOHN, we have completed the work to develop our accreditation scheme and are busy building the internal systems and external support prior to launch. We have decided to take the work we are conducting on quality and clinical practice to produce both high level frameworks and practical guidance. We will continue to use our website as the hub for all those working and using occupational health nursing services and signposting to other resources, in order to provide a one-stop-shop and reduce duplication. Happy reading.

Christina Butterworth, FOHN Chair

FEATURE

Understanding and Controlling Workplace Health Risks

Health professionals spend all their professional lives dealing with health risks, but what exactly does health risk mean in the workplace context and what is the role of the health professional?

Occupational hazards

It has always been a view that by entering a particular form of employment, there is an acceptance that there will be exposure to some form of danger or hazard. Health professionals are likely to be exposed to people with infectious diseases, miners to enclosed spaces and dust, steeplejacks to heights etc.

Our modern understanding of the range of hazards in the workplace is ever-increasing. For example, we understand the link between work, control, and stress better and we know that there are links between how we sit, physical pain and injury arising from it and mental health.

While there is an acceptance that such hazards exist, there are legal duties to reduce the likelihood that the harm they can cause actually materialises. There is a further duty to ensure that where such harm is likely to happen, its impact is minimised, monitored, and managed.

Occupational health risk

The management of workplace health hazards is therefore about reducing the probability of something materialising and the impact that it has.

Choices as to what level of acceptance of risk an employer has is about likelihood and impact which are partly set by law in hard and fast rules that are measurable and non-negotiable. These can be found in things like the occupational exposure limits for certain chemicals which cannot, in any circumstances, be exceeded without legal consequences, e.g. prosecution based on failure to carry out a suitable and sufficient risk assessment and implement suitable control measures.

However, some levels of acceptance of risk are dependent on the employer and their balancing of the cost and inconvenience of preventing or managing the risk against the likelihood that the worker will ever be exposed to sufficient levels of the hazard and the extent of harm to health that might happen consequently. This is expressed in ideas such as the duty to control to a level that is “As Low As Reasonably Practicable.”

Clinical risk and occupational health risk

Health professionals will be well versed in the concept of clinical risk, which considers the potential for adverse consequences to an individual arising out of healthcare interventions (or absence of interventions).

Occupational health risk requires consideration of the need to consider prevention through design, control and management of the work environment in line with a Hierarchy of Controls to prevent health exposures. This is often the province of occupational hygiene specialists, who have formally recognised competence in the anticipation, recognition, evaluation, and control of workplace health hazards.

Typically, the environmental factors that influence the health of a patient are not in the direct influence of healthcare professionals. However, occupational health professionals have the legal authority and, indeed duty, to highlight to employers (and to occupational hygienists if they are engaged) the potential exposures which may have caused individual instances of ill-health.

Some occupational health professionals, with recognised training in occupational hygiene may also be able to identify appropriate controls, including, ultimately if all else fails, Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). The management of clinical risk in this context requires interprofessional working, as the controls necessary to secure the best outcomes for workers often require technical skills that lie outside the training and competence of healthcare professionals and often in the province of occupational hygiene.

Healthcare professionals in occupational settings also carry a legal duty, in relation to specific hazards to identify indications of actual or potential exposure to hazards. This will be through activities such as health surveillance.

It is critical, of course, that in the assessment of individuals there is a thorough understanding of the working context. This has become harder for healthcare professional in the post-pandemic world and because of high volume expectations of contracts focusing on clinical case work, to the exclusion of investing time in familiarising themselves with the workplace.

However, the management of clinical risk does require a suitably high threshold of confidence in the professional that the factors which may affect the health of the worker are being suitably assessed. This is of particular importance with the surveillance of long-latency diseases, where symptoms may be hidden/still to be realised, in which an understanding of the behaviours of workers and the environment where they work are critical to understand risk.

Healthcare workers in occupational contexts face the challenge that their working context is not within the controlled environment of a healthcare setting. Conversely, unlike general public health professionals, occupational health practitioners have the legal duty and the practical opportunity to influence the environments within which individuals work. Thus, for occupational health practitioners when considering the clinical risk of workers in their care, the nature of the work they are carrying out and the workplace itself need to be foremost in their minds. It is key not to miss the opportunity to feedback to the employer any concern of potential harm to the worker due to their work so that any risks to their health can be reviewed and preventative action taken.

Safeguarding risks

A further aspect for Occupational Health Professionals is that they encounter workers who are vulnerable and to whom health professionals have broader healthcare risks to consider. It is important that health professionals take account of the healthcare risks arising from vulnerability.

In summary

Understanding occupational health risk for healthcare professionals is complex because of the context, the legislation and the role that occupational health providers have in helping to manage workplace health risks through employers or those who are responsible for the workplace environments. It is important for occupational health professionals to work inter-professionally and to understand exposure control methods.

The importance of healthcare professionals to understand the specific workplace environment of the patient is critical, since environmental factors can significantly impact the conditions that may affect everything from immune response through to respiratory vulnerability arising from humidity levels.

Occupational hygiene qualifications, such as those offered through BOHS (the British Occupational Hygiene Society), can be useful in deepening the understanding of the nature of health risks within the working environment, as can the extensive literature available from the Health and Safety Executive (HSE).

*Alison Margary
BOHS Past President and Board Member of FOHN
BOHS – The Chartered Society for Worker Health Protection*

NEWS ROUND UP

Become a SOM mentor for nurses, doctors and AHPs considering a career in OH

The aim of this scheme is for those experienced in OH to provide mentoring and coaching for those, within the multi-disciplinary team, considering a career within Occupational Health.

The Mentee will benefit from the mentor's experience and knowledge of OH and put this into the perspective of OH as a career. Mentors will empower mentees to take charge of their own direction, focusing on their potential to enter the speciality, access training and professional development to thrive.

The benefits of mentoring

Mentoring is based on mutual understanding of mentor and mentee rather than set outputs. This is usually on an informal basis, assisting with professional achievement. It can be particularly powerful at times of career change such as for those entering OH, but more difficult to access when the speciality is outside mainstream NHS.

For Mentors

The mentor will share knowledge and passion of OH as a career and provide support to the growth of the OH workforce. Mentors could mentor a mentee from different professional groups. There are great benefits for the mentor. From experience, mentors enjoy the interaction with clinicians from differing backgrounds which widens their and own professional development.

Further information and learning:

- TED talks [here](#)
- Research on mentoring [here](#)
- An eLearning offer from [NHSE](#)
- [SOM professional development](#)

For Mentees

The benefit will be provision of support and tools to make an informed decision with:

- Provision of an understanding of the field of OH as a specialty and signposting to reliable information.
- Identifying transferable skills that could support a move.
- Developing an understanding of different task requirements within OH and varying delivery mechanisms to aid decision making in the choice of role.
- Providing resources to prepare and upskill.
- Signposting to shadow opportunities.



- Building confidence for a move.
- Widening professional networking within the specialty with the introduction to membership and networking groups.
- Advice on further training and education within OH.
- Improving the chances of obtaining a role in OH by supporting networking opportunities.

Next steps

If you are experienced in OH nursing or work in OH as an allied health professional and want to support the specialty, SOM, NSOH, FOHN and iOH with providers such as PAM Group and Cordell Health encourage you to apply for this new opportunity. Training support will be provided to mentors and then an offer put to Mentees to match with those trained based on location. No reimbursement is provided.

How to apply

Please send details for review of:

- your experience in OH
- your experience in supporting others
- what you feel you could provide in the role of mentor to a potential new entrant to the speciality

in 250 words, with your contact details to nick.pahl@som.org.uk or complete this NSOH form [here](#)

Janet O'Neill, Deputy Head National School of Occupational Health

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH

The FOHN defines occupational health nurse practice in four functions. Here are a few resources that will help to build your understanding and fine tune your competence:

1. Health leadership – advanced practice

NMC update on Advanced Practice

The NMC have published the results of initial independent research, commissioned from The Nuffield Trust, to help consider whether advanced practice nursing and midwifery should have additional regulation.

Link: https://www.nmc.org.uk/globalassets/sitedocuments/councilpapersanddocuments/council-2023/advanced-practice-report-final.pdf?utm_source=Nursing%20and%20Midwifery%20Council&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=13914342_Advanced%20Practice%2010%20May%202023&dm_i=129A,8A8DI,UWM6G1,Y1YJO,1

2. Health risk management – understanding risk assessment

Guidance on the assessment of health risk help to reduce the potential harm and occupational illness. Here are some examples form high risk industries.

<https://www.icmm.com/en-gb/our-work/innovation-for-sustainability/health-and-safety/risk-management/health-risk-assessment>

<https://www.ipieca.org/resources/health-risk-assessment>

3. Fitness for work – ethical considerations

Ethics Guidance for Occupational Health Practice – 8th Edition now available

Contents of the book includes information on:

- Governance
- The General Data Protection Regulation 2016 (GDPR)
- Workplace Ethical Issues
- Occupational Health Research
- Fitness for Work: The Legal-Ethical Interface

You can purchase a copy via the FOM [website](#)

<https://www.fom.ac.uk/media-events/publications/faculty-publications>

4. Wellbeing - mental health

Acas has new and updated guidance on managing work-related stress to support both employers and workers.

The guidance covers:

- Causes and signs of stress
- Understanding the law on work-related stress
- Supporting employees with work-related stress
- Preventing work-related stress

Check out the '[Stress at Work](#)' toolkit for assets and resources for you to use. The theme for Mental Health Awareness Week (15 - 21 May) this year is 'anxiety', so please also check out the '[Managing in Difficult Times](#)' toolkit for further resources and assets.

EVENTS AND COURSES

There are plenty of courses and events for OH professionals to enhance their practice – it just helps to know where to look! Here are a few coming up for 2023:

FOHN

FOHN is pleased to launch its webinar series for 2023:

- May
19 May @ 10am – **Evidence based practice** with Wendy Jones, FOHN Board
- June
29 June @ 7pm – Revalidation and the new NMC Standards with Stephanie Foster, FOHN Board
- September – Sleep. Date to be confirmed.
- October – International perspective with AAOHN

Book via admin@fohn.org.uk

British Occupational Hygiene Society (BOHS)

OH2023: The Workplace Health Protection Conference **Monday, 12 - Thursday, 15 June 2023**

[Link] <https://www.bohs.org/events-networking/events/upcoming-events/detail/oh2023/>

Courses [Link] <https://www.bohs.org/learn/>

EOPH

A Concise Guide to Supporting Mental Health in the Workplace for Occupational Health Practitioners

16 June 2023 09.30 to 16.00 Virtual Course

Our new one-day online course is focused on the development of skills to identify mental health conditions, taking work factors into consideration.

Overview:

- Exploration of common mental health conditions, neurodiversity, suicide risk assessment, trauma and sleep hygiene
- Looking at mental health workability in safety critical roles
- Case studies focusing on mental health consultations and potential workplace adjustments
- Mental health services available within the current landscape.

Includes pre and post course information plus a copy of 'Mental Health in the Workplace' written by Libby.

Course lead: Libby Morley-Hassanali and Dr Laura Adcroft



Book here: <https://bookwhen.com/eoph/e/ev-sol8-20230616093000>

Occupational Health Technician Course Online Learning Course

A highly interactive online course, suitable for new entrants to the profession as well as a refresher course on the core principles for existing technicians. You can work through this course independently at a time that suits you. The course is split into 2 parts with a total of 18 E-Learning modules to complete.

Course Lead: Dr Emma Giblin and Kathy Roberts

Book here: <https://bookwhen.com/eoph/e/ev-si63-20230314000000>

Occupational Health 2023 | 14th-16th June QUALITY and INNOVATION

The FOM/SOM Conference will take place in Newcastle from 14-16 June 2023. If you have not already booked, [register now](#) as fees increase on 2 May 2023.

The Conference venue is the Frederick Douglass Centre, which is part of Newcastle University, and has a packed [programme](#) and fun [social events](#) giving opportunities for plenty of networking.

Speakers include Professor Sir Simon Wessely, Institute of Psychiatry, Psychology & Neuroscience, King's College, London and Dr Elaine Wainwright, Lecturer in MSK Health, University of Aberdeen.

<https://www.occupationalhealthconferences.com/registration/>

2023 NHS HEALTH AT WORK NETWORK ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Thursday 14 September 2023 09:00 – 15:45

Chesford Grange Conference Centre, Kenilworth, Warwickshire

Members and non-members welcome

- Day delegate places for members start at £175
- Day delegate places for non-members are £295

For information and booking enquiries, contact: admin@nhshealthatwork.co.uk

Details of other courses and conferences can be found on the FOHN website [Link]

<https://www.linkedin.com/company/fohn>

Our Autumn newsletter will include a Feature on sleep from our friends at Sleep Unlimited.

Follow us on social media to be kept up to date with research, consultations and CPD

[Link] <https://www.facebook.com/groups/2173813195966817/>

[Link] <https://www.linkedin.com/company/fohn>



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