



YOU MATTER!

The Newsletter
keeping you informed
of what's going on in
Occupational Health

Issue No. 8 ~ July/August 2001



Welcome to Cornwall!

We are delighted to report that the Occupational Health and Safety Service now includes all Cornish Practices. This means that the **pilot scheme**, which has been running in South and West Devon since October 1999, now becomes an **established service**.

We plan to use this opportunity to consolidate and extend the service delivery and we will be assisted in this process by the appointment of a full-time Occupational Health Nurse Specialist who will be based in Devon and Cornwall.

Georgina Wingfield has been appointed to this post and is already beginning to contact Practices.

Georgina qualified as a SRN at St Thomas' Hospital (1974), SCM at Treliske Hospital (1977), and holds the BSc (Hons) Health Studies (Nursing) (University of Plymouth) and BSc OHN, Specialist Practitioner Award (University of Bristol). She has a broad range of clinical nursing experience including Practice Nursing.

She has worked in the field of occupational health nursing for the past six years. Appointments have included Occupational Health Advisor (1997-1999) to Eastbourne and County Healthcare NHS Trust where she was involved in occupational health service provision to General Practice staff. More recently she worked as Occupational Health Advisor (1999-2001) for Hammersmith Hospitals NHS Trust. Areas of specific interest include health promotion and research. Georgina is delighted to return to the southwest. She is looking forward to your support and will meet with you 'dreckly.'

Sue and Lesley will continue with managing and developing the service, manning the advice Helpline and making some of the Practice visits.

We would also like to welcome **Dr Stephen Szweda** to the team. Stephen is the Consultant Occupational Health Physician for the Royal Cornwall NHS Trust. He will be working alongside **Dr Woodroof**, Consultant Occupational Health Physician in Devon.



Dr Ben Charnaud, Consultant Psychiatrist.

Ben has been quietly working away as part of the 'green card' scheme but has now become more formally involved with the OH & S service on a regular basis. It's great to have his support!

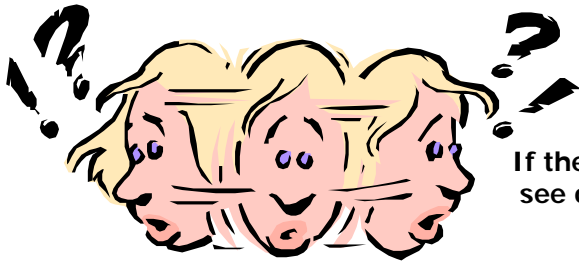
Ben has a broad based experience in adult, child, substance abuse and rehabilitation psychiatry. He does practice psychotherapy but felt it important to tell you that he doesn't have a couch!



You may have noticed.....

The government has just published guidance on 'Occupational Health and Safety Services for General Medical Practitioners and their Staff' www.doh.gov.uk/healthandsafety/occupationalhealth.pdf

The service is famous!! – The 'Woodroof/Longdon' model is given as an example within the guidance. The description of the model is more than a little outdated now having been originally penned before the pilot scheme started, but nevertheless it has been given recognition. We will now ensure that we build on the firm foundations of the pilot scheme and stay at the peak of 'best practice!'



Commonly Asked Questions – Topic: Occupational Health

If there are any aspects/issues at work that you would like to see openly discussed in this newsletter - please get in touch. We will be happy to oblige.

As part of embracing all of Cornwall and South & West Devon within the OH Service for Primary Care, we thought it would be an opportune moment to answer a few Questions about Occupational Health & Safety itself.

<p>Q: "Is Occupational Health the same as Occupational Therapy?"</p>	<p>No! They are two completely distinct professions and have very different functions. They are as far apart as dentistry is from medicine.</p>
<p>Q: "So what is Occupational Health & Safety?"</p>	<p>Occupational Health is about managing and minimising any ill health effects that your job may have upon you. It is also about ensuring that any condition that you may have or may develop is not made worse by the job that you do. Your employer has a duty in law to protect you and himself in this way.</p> <p>Safety is a more familiar concept to most of us and is about the obvious risks to health in any workplace such as slippery floors, trailing leads, fire hazards etc.</p> <p>Health & Safety law dictates that you and your employer work in a safe environment and undertake safe practices at work.</p>
<p>Q: "Oh I see, this is all stuff that has come across the Channel as EU law and has been imposed upon us is it – like straight cucumbers?!"</p>	<p>No, actually there have been concerns about working conditions in this country since the 1800s and the start of the Industrial Revolution. In 1831 the first Factory Act was brought into being to force employers to take responsibility for the ill health that they were causing amongst their workers. Currently it is the Health & Safety at Work etc Act 1974 that determines how employers and employees must comply with the law.</p>



<p>Q: “Yes, but we’re not exactly into the business of sending little boys up chimneys any more are we?”</p>	<p>No, but we are into the business of allowing a young, inexperienced receptionist face an angry and aggressive patient who makes her feel stupid and scared. And we are into the business of allowing tired, stressed GPs see extra patients at the end of a clinic when they are more likely to make a mistake which, in this day and age, could seriously affect their career.</p>
<p>Q: “So, are you telling me that Occupational Health & Safety has got all the answers to such intractable issues?”</p>	<p>No, just as there were no simple solutions to the appalling working conditions of the 1800s there are no easy answers to the work hazards of today that challenge our mental well being. But, Occupational Health & Safety is the route via which we can tackle such issues, as in the past attitudes and circumstances have changed.</p> <p>This Occupational Health & Safety Service (OHSS) for Primary Care is not about making more work for you but about</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assisting you to meet your statutory obligations (both those imposed by law and those imposed by the current Government), and • Making Practice life better and improving the working lives of you and your staff. <p>Health & Safety law uses the term ‘as far as is reasonably practicable’. This is important – you have not got to jump through hoops, you have simply got to do the most reasonable thing under the circumstances. It is commonsense.</p>
<p>Q: “So why have we never had Occupational Health & Safety before if we need it so much?”</p>	<p>As we all know, the NHS as an employer has not always been at the cutting edge. Having said that, NHS staff within secondary care has had access to Occupational Health & Safety since the early 1980s. Services have been variable but, nevertheless, there.</p> <p>Primary Care staff have missed out until now. This has been recognised and rectified by the Government within the last few months.</p>
<p>Q: “Do people in all walks of life have access to Occupational Health & Safety services?”</p>	<p>Yes and No! All of the big multi-nationals will provide such a service for their staff – the nature of the service varies according to the nature of the industry.</p> <p>But, most small to medium sized businesses in this country do not have an OH&SS – not because they don’t want or need it but because they think they can’t afford it.</p> <p>This is a shame as it is not difficult to demonstrate the value of an OH&SS in pure financial terms, let alone human gains.</p> <p>Staff in GP Practices are in a lucky position – because you are, in effect, lots of small businesses doing the same thing. Therefore, across S&W Devon and Cornwall you have clubbed together and an OH&SS that serves you all has been funded.</p>



Q: "You mean that this service is just for us in GP Practices?"	Yes very much so. We don't need to tell you how different you and your work demands are from other NHS staff! This service is driven by your needs and so it is really important that you talk to us and let us know 'how it is'.
Q: "Does that mean you will actually come to the Practice and listen to what I have to say?"	Will next Thursday afternoon do? You provide the coffee and biscuits; we'll bring the practical support!

Display Screen Equipment – Competent Person Training Course

These training courses have proved very popular and we now have 22 'competent persons' in South and West Devon.

The **next course** will be hosted by Norton Brook Medical Centre in Kingsbridge (thank you to them!) on **Thursday 27th September (full day) and Friday 12th October (half day).**

Attendance is necessary on both days.

Interested? – Contact the Helpline (see below) to book a place or to learn more. **Cost:** £70 per person.

The course will equip Practice Managers (or those nominated by them) to assess computer workstations and put realistic improvements in place. Assessment is a legal requirement as well as helping to proactively prevent health problems occurring.

If you are able to host a training course you will need to be able to accommodate up to 12 people - the course will be free to your nominee and you will also have at least two of your workstations assessed as part of the training process. Contact us at the Helpline if you are able to help or require more information.

A funny thing happened at the surgery the other day.....







A West Devon Practice reports an unusual Occupational Health and safety hazard!!

Finding the local vet closed a patient brought in an injured stoat, clearly in the expectation that the Doctors would treat it!

Unfortunately, staff were unable to locate a suitable protocol and therefore declined to treat this unusual patient!

Do you have any 'a funny thing happened' stories – humorous or otherwise? – We would love to hear them - please send to the address below.

Contact Details

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