



YOU MATTER!

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

Issue No. 3 ~ May 2000

Are You Having to deal with Abusive Phone Calls at Work?

Future Funding for Occupational Health

We are pleased to announce a further year's funding in addition to a general feeling that such funding will become permanent.

We are grateful for the support of all South and West Devon PCG Chief Executives as well as the continuing support of South and West Devon

Practice staff should not be expected to accept abuse or distressing comments whilst receiving telephone calls as part of their work. You might like to consider using the following procedure: -

If you feel the caller is behaving in an unreasonable manner, try responding as follows:

"You clearly feel very strongly about the points you are making. To ensure that I fully understand your concerns and can look into them for you, I am going to record the rest of your telephone call"

If staff have easy access to a recorder (e.g. a dictaphone), it may be used – simply hold it near to the telephone earpiece (N.B. It is legal to record a phone call, provided the caller is notified of the fact). If no recorder is readily available, and the caller continues to be abusive, state the following:

"I need to arrange a tape recorder – I will now end this telephone call and ring you back shortly; please may I have your number"

It is important to keep a record of incidents such as distressing phone calls for later discussion within your Practice meetings. In this way particular culprits or patterns can be identified and preventative action considered.

Caption Competition...

Is this typical of your surgery?
What do you think the people in the cartoon are saying?

Fill in the speech bubbles with your own words – the best entry will win a £10 Marks & Spencer voucher, closing date 30 June. Contact details on the back page...



"A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A TYPICAL DEVON SURGERY!!"



“Mental Health Problems in Primary Care Staff”

There is clear evidence of an increase in the levels of distress amongst all Primary Care staff. The consequences of this are palpable at all levels – from individual to national. Problems may be acute or become chronic and can range from stress to severe depression.

The role of an Occupational Health Service is not only to facilitate treatment but also to identify preventable work related factors. We all have the right to not have our health damaged by our work. This applies as much to mental health as to other work related injury.

Intuitively some examples of causes are workload, expectation, and ambiguity of contract, isolation, complaints and violent/abusive behaviour.

Preventative strategies are possible. Most have at their core a need for respect. Respect for ourselves and for our colleagues. A need to demand respect from our patients as well as from others who influence our workload. They can operate at different levels:

- **Personal** – i.e. training, mentorship, supervision, buddy schemes
- **Practice** - i.e. policies, working patterns, systems and training
- **PCG/HA** - i.e. strategies for staff health, realistic workload, policies for dealing with violence and abuse

As a service we want to begin to tackle some of these. Priorities are to facilitate a staff counselling service and a culture where training, mentorship and supervision are widely available for those who want them.

We are interested to hear from you of any ideas you may have and are keen to use this newsletter to encourage discussion.



Health and Safety Law Poster must be replaced by July 2000!

It is a legal requirement for employers to either display an approved Health and Safety Law poster or to provide employees with the equivalent leaflets.

The old poster is out-of-date and has been replaced by a new poster that reflects the changes in legislation. It must be displayed by 1st July 2000.



Diary Date!

23rd November 2000

Date for your diary. “Why our patients make us ill?” - Conference to be held at St. Mellion Golf and Country Club, Near Saltash, Cornwall. Further details to follow

Copies of the new poster and leaflets are available from HSE books Tel: 01787 881 165 Poster £7.50. Leaflet – pack of 25 for £5.

Remember – you must display this poster for the benefit of all employees by law.



Mercury Spillage...

Do you have a selection of mercury-filled sphygmomanometer and thermometers around? Most Practices do. There is a reasonable chance that they will eventually break and the mercury contained within them will be released.

We will be including detailed guidance on dealing with a mercury spillage in the Occupational Health Service manual, but for now, here is a shortened advice note:

Mercury is a toxic metal, which can cause ill-health effects via inhalation of the vapour and by permeation of the skin i.e. **Do not touch it with bare skin and try not to breathe it in.**

- ❖ Ensure that your Practice has a mercury spillage kit available for use at all times. (See below for stockists and prices).
- ❖ Dispose of any **uncontaminated** glass in a Sharps bin. **DO NOT** put any mercury-contaminated material in the 'normal' Sharps bin.
- ❖ Make an on-the-spot assessment of the severity of the spill.
- ❖ Exclude people from the area if possible.
- ❖ Ventilate the area as well as you are able.
- ❖ Wear the gloves and mask provided in the kit, and follow the instructions carefully.
- ❖ Use the syringe (or foam pad) provided to draw up the loose mercury, gather together any tiny globules with the scoop and brush.
- ❖ Seal the re-captured mercury in the container provided.
- ❖ Local arrangements for the disposal of mercury and contaminated material vary from area to area, but you will need to inform the company who usually collect your clinical waste. For reimbursement of the costs involved contact Shirley Miller, Finance Dept., S&W Devon H.A.
- ❖ **Replace mercury-containing sphygmomanometer and thermometers with non-mercury versions (particularly sphygmomanometer because of the greater amount of mercury contained within them).** If possible, replace this equipment before it breaks.

Mercury spillage kits can be made up 'in house' although it is important that you get the contents right. Check on the contents of commercially available kits. They contain:

- A sealable, disposable container partially filled with absorbent alloy wool or media
- One or two syringes or a foam pad
- Protective gloves
- Plastic scoop and brush
- Face mask (appropriate for protection against mercury vapour)
- A large sealable container in which all the contaminated material may be placed on completion of the 'clean up'

Some items within the kit can only be used once and must then be disposed of.

Stockists include: (Prices as of April 2000)

- Mercury Safety Products.. Tel: 0115 9213833
SW Scientific Tel: 0117 9354455 - Price: £143.33 exc. VAT + p&p
Fisons/Fisher Scientific Tel: 01509 231166 - Price: £75.00 exc. VAT, inc. p&p (does not include face mask)
Philip Harris..... Tel: 029 207 32131 - Mercury collecting vessel only. Price: £6.67 exc.VAT+ p&p

Source: *British Occupational Hygiene Society*

Working in partnership with Devon and Cornwall Primary Care



Are You Responsible for Health and Safety?

Are you struggling to understand what your responsibilities are, let alone fulfilling them? What does Risk Assessment mean to you?

May we recommend 'Managing Safely', a training course nationally accredited by the Institute of Occupational Health and Safety (IOSH) we would be happy to recommend providers of training on request.

We would also be interested to hear of other health and safety courses that you have found particularly useful to your role in Primary Care. Please email Sue or Lesley (address on back of newsletter)

Coming soon in 'YOU MATTER' – **Risk Assessment made easy** – a series of scenarios appropriate to your workplace.

Watch out for the next 'YOU MATTER' – which is changing in colour from orange to cream and blue! The Medical Sickness Society is kindly sponsoring future publications.

Needle Stick Injury Prevention and Management

Calling all PRACTICE NURSES – get something tangible from your professional membership of the RCN!! The RCN is currently running a campaign to increase the awareness of the Health & Safety aspects of Needle Stick Injury (NSI) prevention and management.



Campaign literature and materials will be made available shortly – FREE to RCN members. These will include:

- ❖ A resource pack
- ❖ General information leaflet
- ❖ Research to collate NSI rates

To get your copy ring Sheelagh Brewer on 020 7647 3570.

Free At Point Of Delivery

We are frequently being asked how much we charge for a particular part of the service.

Please note!

Occupational Health for Primary Care is currently funded by your Health Authority and is therefore FREE at the Point of Delivery to all Practices in South and West Devon

Delivered To Your Door!

The Occupational Health & Safety Manuals have arrived and will be distributed to all Practices in South and West Devon within the next few weeks.

Further policies and guidelines will be sent for inclusion as they are developed.

Contact Details for the OH



0117 923 2381 any Wednesday morning from 09:00 – 12:30hrs



You can fax us at any time on: 0117 923 2382 or 01530 224 759



You can email us any time at: sue@abbottburke.co.uk or lesley@abbottburke.co.uk



Our postal address is: 33 Logan Road, Bishopston, Bristol BS7 8DS

If you are not certain that your query or concern is related to Occupational Health, do not let this stop you – we will do our best to help.

All enquiries will be treated in confidence.

Working in partnership with Devon and Cornwall Primary Care

