



SASOHN news

6TH WORLD CONGRESS ON COMMUNITY HEALTH NURSING: 20 – 21 JUNE 2016, TWIN TOWERS HOTEL, WOODSTOCK, CAPE TOWN

The South African Society of Occupational Health Nurses (SASOHN), under the leadership of the SASOHN National President, Mrs Kim Davies, called for SASOHN members in the Western Cape to submit abstracts to the organising committee of the 6th World Congress on Community Health Nursing held on 20 and 21 June 2016.

Mrs Nicolene de Jager from the University of Johannesburg was the keynote speaker with a presentation entitled Strategies to facilitate professional development of the occupational health nurse in the occupational health setting. Nicolene's research determined the needs of the occupational health nurse (OHN) in relation to professional development, and the need to develop strategies in order to facilitate such development. This research came about as she realised that OHNs experience an excessive work load which often causes them to not keep up to date with the latest trends in occupational health. The results of the study revealed four major categories: constraints hindering the OHN in developing professionally, positive aspects identified by the OHNs regarding the need for professional development, the development needs of the OHN, and suggestions as to how to meet these development needs. The findings have been presented at an international conference and an article has been published; this was an additional opportunity to disseminate the results of this important aspect of occupational health nursing.

The following SASOHN members also presented at the Congress:

- Anne Gray: Overview of an integrated approach to the role, management and interpretation of special health investigations in a legislated occupational medical surveillance programme. This presentation highlighted the careful consideration needed when making decisions about the selection of special occupational health investigations, the performance thereof, and the scope of practice of the occupational health practitioner, towards making accurate medical conclusions in the best interest of the worker, co-worker and employer
- Beverley Beute: A practical application of occupational health and safety concepts. This presentation focused on all relevant South African legislation that provides a framework for company health and safety policies. The presentation demonstrated what an occupational medical surveillance programme consisted of, with the focus on employer and employee responsibilities in terms of occupational health and safety. It highlighted issues around fitness to work, factors that might compromise safety, work and non-work related health effects impacting on the employer, occupational disease notification procedures, and ill health incapacity management
- Theresa Bosman: Factors influencing the function and professional development of the occupational health nurses within selected organisations in the Western Cape. This presentation was based on Ms Bosman's research which investigated factors

influencing the functions and professional development of OHNs. The research revealed that 50% of OHNs in the selected organisations did not understand their function as OHNs, and that the majority worked alone without any administrative support; and illustrated the importance of continuous professional development

- Judy Hendra: Occupational health services conducted in mobile units in RSA. Due to the poor economic climate, smaller companies do not have the luxury of employing full time, or even part time, Occupational Health Medicine Practitioners (OHMPs) or OHNs to provide mandated occupational health services as required by the Occupational Health and Safety Act No 85 of 1993. This presentation illustrated the value of an employer caring for its employees through risk assessments, job descriptions and human job specifications, health assessments, audiometric testing, spirometry, the accurate interpretation of results, ongoing monitoring, and referral processes
 - Margot Pretorius: Knowledge and practices of occupational health nurse practitioners in the management of diabetes mellitus in South Africa. This research undertook to study the assessment, knowledge and practice of OHNPs in managing diabetes in the workplace. The results confirmed that there are gaps in the screening for, and knowledge of, diabetes mellitus among OHNPs. The recommendation was for further research to determine actual knowledge, and the development of a guideline for nursing practice. Continuous training and professional development are necessary in screening for, and diagnosis of, diabetes by OHNPs in South Africa
 - Kim Davies: Occupational health practice in South Africa. This presentation illustrated how the work environment has changed over the years, resulting in evolving demands of healthcare. Due to changes in legislation, the nursing professional role and activities also need to be adjusted. The OHN finds herself taking on many different roles to meet the changing burden of disease and demands of healthcare. Progressive professional development will ensure that OHNs develop the ability to adapt to the changing needs of the working population for which they are responsible
 - Louwna Pretorius: Occupational health nursing practitioner as a member of the management team. This presentation highlighted the importance of the OHNP becoming a team player within a management team, bringing diverse knowledge and skills. Some of the skills identified for managers and leaders were technical skills, and human behaviour and conceptual skills. Even in a climate of budget and organisational constraints, consultation and education of employees and management by the OHNP are part of proactive leadership and active participation in an organisation
- The attendance at this congress afforded the international audience an opportunity to learn from one another, and created a platform to engage one-on-one and share valuable experiences in all spheres of community health nursing, including occupational health.

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