



SASOHN's 12th Academic Day: Norms and standards in occupational health

Am I still on the right track? We have all asked, or should have asked, this question at some stage. Here is your opportunity to answer at least part of that question within the dynamic and ever-changing landscape of occupational healthcare norms and standards. Evaluation forms, diligently completed at the end of every SASOHN event, have highlighted that members want to learn more about various legal and ethical solutions to the dilemmas encountered amongst vulnerable worker populations in the occupational health setting. The SASOHN Academic Day will endeavour to first, address the same requested topics addressed by at least two regions each year and, second, provide a platform for professional development of occupational health nurses who may not have the means to attend the annual SASOHN Conference.

This year SASOHN has the opportunity to add an international flavour to the programme as the International Commission on Occupational Health (ICOH) Scientific Committee on Occupational Health Nursing (SCOHN) midterm meeting coincides with the Cape Town Academic Day. Both the Johannesburg and the Cape Town programmes have a session on 'Global trends in Occupational Health,' allowing participants to benchmark the development of their services against international service delivery. ICOH speakers will address the audiences at both events this year. Susan Randolph, the SCOHN chairperson from the USA, will address the audience on her PhD research which explored occupational health solutions for vulnerable employees in the agricultural sector.

While performing a management role, the OHNP needs to ensure that he/she or the team is providing an evidence-based service. Presentations from doctoral research projects will provide guidance on the principles and awareness of how to apply Recent Research in OH Practice. In other words, using some of their own recent findings will help to ascertain what this means for the OH team and how OHNPs can facilitate or incorporate these to improve their practice within the recommend norms. The Occupational Health and Safety Act and its regulations are amended regularly. As OHNPs we don't always put aside time to update ourselves on the Changes in the OHS Act, and the intricacy, the motivation and/or the impact that this has on the provision of a legally compliant service.

From our changing legislative framework, standards need to evolve, and the SASOHN regions

have taken on the challenge to address this need through the various monthly regional meetings. At the Academic Day, participants have an opportunity to grapple with some of the questions they raised on the SASOHN chat group and/or those that were received by the SASOHN Executive Committee members, with subject-specific experts. This year the focus is on Understanding of the Spirometry Ranges. For instance, why are we using ECCS reference values recommended by SANS when it is known that a large portion of our worker population requires a 10% adjustment to this 'norm'? Why do some pulmonologists and/or pulmonary technologists want to compare actual values with Quanjer 2012 reference values? Why conduct a spirometry and a chest X-ray? Wouldn't it be more cost effective to conduct one or the other? Calibrating the calibration syringe through America . . . surely there should be a SANS standard so that it can be done in South Africa?

There have also been changes in the mining industry with regard to reporting of occupational diseases, which will be addressed. For example, what is the standard threshold shift from the milestone baseline directive in the mining industry that is being implemented, compared to the SANS 10083:2013 percentage loss of hearing shifts, when determining noise-induced hearing loss? What impact will the guideline have on fatigue management?

An expert from the mining industry will address the latest Reporting on Occupational Health Diseases as required by DMR. The Programme will end with a lively interactive panel debate where participants are invited to engage with a panel of experts, representing the Department of Labour, workers' union, SASOM, SASOHN, SAIOH and the National Institute for Occupational Health (NIOH), regarding the ethics of Achieving Quality Occupational Health Services in South Africa.

We look forward to you joining SASOHN on 4 May in Johannesburg at the Aviator Hotel, or on 18 May in Cape Town at the Townhouse Hotel, where you will also earn CPD points. Registration forms are available from www.sasohn.co.za or by request from the SASOHN Head Office at office@sasohn.co.za.

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