



Report on the ICOH Scientific Committee on Education and Training in Occupational Health Symposium

October 2017 saw the Scientific Committee on Education and Training in Occupational Health (SCETOH) convening a joint symposium with the Scientific Committees on Rural Health and Effectiveness in Occupational Health Services, titled *Education in occupational safety and health, emerging trends and unmet needs*. The symposium was held in the beautiful city of Zagreb, Croatia, under the auspices of the Croatian Institute for Health Protection and Safety at Work which, in collaboration with SCETOH, led by Marija Bubas and Frank van Dijk, also organised the event.

The symposium opened on Thursday evening at the Palace of the Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts where delegates were welcomed by the President of the Class of Medical Sciences of the Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts, as well as a representative of Mrs Kolinda Grabar Kitarovic, the President of the Republic of Croatia. This prestigious delegation of welcoming officials represented the status afforded this international symposium, with delegates representing 60 countries.

Following the welcome, four keynote presentations set the scene for the following day and a half of oral and poster presentations. Frank van Dijk from the Netherlands highlighted the research needs and opportunities in education and training in occupational health (OH). Van Dijk's presentation urged delegates to consider appropriate designs for evaluation research in OH education and training, and encouraged participants to implement effective evaluation studies on education systems and educational interventions. Davide Bosio from Italy presented the new International Labour Organization (ILO) International Training Centre (ITC) Masters degree in Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) programme, presented at the University of Turin, Italy. This one-year course is offered through blended learning with two Internet-based distance-learning phases and an 11-week residential period in Turin. Jadranka Mustajbegovic from Croatia gave a talk on education in occupational medicine in Croatia, titled 'Known, knowns and unknowns - the present state'. Mustajbegovic drew attention to the fact that occupational medicine is infused throughout many of the medicine courses at an undergraduate level, as well as at a post-graduate level. The School of Medicine at the University of Zagreb has one of the oldest occupational medicine courses in the world, started in 1949. Marija Bubas closed this session with a talk on training in interdisciplinary team work in the Croatian Institute for Health Protection and Safety at Work (CIHPSW). The CIHPSW has

both occupational physicians and safety experts working together for workers' health and safety. A particularly interesting aspect of the symposium was that it addressed the education and training of not only OH professionals, but also workers.

Friday morning opened with a round table session where presenters from Europe, Japan, China, India, Australia, Africa (South Africa – Penny Orton), Latin America and the USA described experiences in training health professionals: 'Current situation and unmet needs around the globe'. There was a preponderance of training of occupational medicine practitioners and only one presentation on the education of specialist OH nurses. This presentation was well supported by delegates and it was acknowledged that medicine and nursing need to work more closely on the education and training of the various OH professionals. The afternoon was split into four parallel sessions, followed by poster presentations. The parallel sessions included: international collaboration in strengthening capacities in OSH training; education of students and professionals – troubleshooting and how to do it; education of old and new target groups; education and training in agricultural health and safety; and exchange of experiences in teaching methods, blended-learning and organising a repository of electronic materials. Twenty posters were presented on a variety of topics where worker education predominated; many posters were presented by members of the CIHPSW. Presentations were made to small groups of delegates who moved between the posters in order to make the process manageable.

South Africa was represented by Muzi Zungu from the National Institute for Occupational Health (NIOH) and the University of Pretoria, and Penny Orton, representing the South African Society of Occupational Health Nursing Practitioners (SASOHN) and the Durban University of Technology (DUT). There were two occupational medicine practitioners from Mozambique, one of whom is specialising in occupational medicine at the University of Cape Town (UCT). Zungu presented a paper on occupational health and safety for naïve health workers in South Africa, which concluded that health workers who enjoy the support of their senior management can be trained to conduct basic occupational health and safety activities at work. Orton presented on OH nurse training in southern Africa and concluded that the time was right for the specialist training of nurses' curriculum to be influenced by international trends as the curriculum is currently being redesigned. The training of specialist OH nurses to the level to which they are trained in South Africa is advanced in



Dr Muzi Zungu (NIOH, Johannesburg) and Dr Penny Orton (Durban University of Technology, Durban).

Photographer: Unknown

comparison with the rest of the world, where it appears that specialist OH nurse education is still a 'short course' and not presented at the post-graduate level of the qualifications offered in South Africa. The integration of basic OH services into primary healthcare in order to reach more workers was promoted on many occasions during the symposium. This presents an opportunity for educational institutions and health services which educate and train primary healthcare providers.

Saturday concluded the symposium with a further two sessions of five and six presentations each. Frank van Dijk closed the symposium with a summing up of the main messages, which are believed to need increased attention and should guide further work:

1. Education of workers, managers and students in vocational schools is a tool for change.
2. Education for workers, managers and vocational students is under-estimated and there is a need to increase these offerings in order to improve health and safety in the workplace.
3. More attention needs to be paid to interdisciplinary collaboration in OSH training: "Education and training of experts in OSH deserves much more attention as the needs are high, compared with the numbers of experts and training capacities. Occupational health nurses can play a key role. Cordial and effective interdisciplinary collaboration has to be part of education dedicated to the common goal of supporting workers and enterprises in occupational safety and health."¹
4. Basic occupational healthcare is urgently needed and should be infused into the training of primary/community healthcare providers, agricultural healthcare workers and medical students.
5. The evaluation of OSH education is important - "no education without evaluation."
6. There is a need to improve teaching techniques, particularly in blended learning and electronic learning.
7. Think about OH learning needs in context – learning

objectives must be relevant to the prevailing context, which should form the base for educational advancement.

8. Collaboration, nationally and internationally, between organisations, institutions and networks is important.

Some of the many resources to which I was introduced through various speakers, and which readers might be interested in exploring further, include:

1. Foundation Learning and Developing Occupational Health (LDOH) [www.ldoh.net]
2. Basic Occupational Healthcare in Agriculture: a concise course for practitioners in primary healthcare [<https://ldoh.net/>]
3. National Centre for Farmer Health in Australia [www.farmerhealth.org.au]
4. European Network Education and Training in Occupational Safety and Health [www.enetosh.net]
5. HealthWISE, a joint initiative between ILO and WHO – work improvement in health services [http://www.ilo.org/beijing/what-we-do/publications/WCMS_237276/lang-en/index.htm and http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/-/ed_dialogue/---sector/documents/instructionalmaterial/wcms_237276.pdf]
6. Virtual patient training materials [www.virtualpatient.net]
7. Occupational Hygiene – advancing occupational hygiene worldwide [<http://ohlearning.com/default.aspx>]

REFERENCE

1. Bubas M, van Dijk F. Report of the Symposium Education in OSH, emerging trends and unmet needs; 26-28 October 2018; Zagreb, Croatia. Available from <https://ldoh.net/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/Report-ICOH-SCETOH-Symposium-Zagreb-2017.pdf> (accessed 27 Mar 2018).

*Report by: Dr Penny Orton
SASOHN Member
pennyo@dut.ac.za*