

6. Occupational Health and Safety Professionals

Overview: Occupational Health Nurses

Occupational Health Nursing is a recognized specialty practice under the Canadian Nurses Association (CNA). It is defined by the American Association of Occupational Health Nurses (AAOHN) as “the specialty practice providing for and delivering cost-effective health and safety services to employees and employee population. The practice is autonomous and focuses on the promotion and restoration of health, prevention of illness and injury, and the protection from occupational health and safety hazards within the context of a safe and healthy work environment”.¹⁵⁶

This section provides information on some of the OHS professionals who can assist and advise for Occupational Health and Safety Management Systems implementation.

Functions of Occupational Health Nurses

Occupational health nurses provide a variety of services and functions in their practice including:

- health promotion and injury/illness prevention
- health surveillance for those worker who may be exposed to health hazards (i.e. audiometric testing for noise exposed workers; blood lead levels for lead exposed workers)
- health monitoring for workers who have health conditions that may impact on their ability to do their jobs safely, or where workplace exposures may have a detrimental effect on their health
- pre-placement health assessments to match fitness for work with bona fide occupational requirements such as job demands
- primary care and case management for ill or injured workers
- counselling
- referral to Employee Assistance Programs
- management and administration
- research
- worker education
- job hazard analysis and control of hazards
- ergonomic assessments, and
- a variety of other services

Resources for occupational health nurses in Canada include:

- Canadian Nurses Association (CNA) for information on certification for occupational health nurses: www.cna-nurses.ca/CNA
- Canadian Occupational Health Nurses Association (COHNA/ACIIST): www.cohna-aciist.ca
 - ◆ Each province (except Prince Edward Island, Yukon, Nunavut and the Northwest Territories) has a provincial occupational health nurses association with representation of the COHNA Board.
- World Health Organization: The Role of the Occupational Health Nurse in Workplace Health Management - WHO Regional Office for Europe
www.who.int/occupational_health/regions/en/oeheurnursing.pdf

Occupational Health Physicians

Overview

Occupational health physicians are medical doctors who have specialized in the field of occupational medicine. They deal specifically with worker health to diagnose and treat occupational injuries, illnesses and diseases that may stem from workplace exposures.

Resources for occupational health physicians include:

Canada

- Occupational and Environmental Association of Canada (OEMAC) <http://www.oemac.org/>

United States

- ACOEM - American College of Occupational and Environmental Medicine www.acoem.org

Occupational Hygienists

Overview

Occupational Hygienist are professionals dedicated to the Anticipation, Recognition, Evaluation, Communication and Control of environmental stressors in, or arising from, the work place that may result in injury, illness, impairment, or affect the well-being of workers and members of the community. These stressors are normally divided into the categories biological, chemical, physical, ergonomic and psychosocial. Occupational hygienists have a baccalaureate degree in engineering, chemistry, or physics or closely related biological or physical science, or a Masters degree in Occupation Hygiene. Occupational hygienists can pursue a professional designation as a Registered Occupational Hygienist (ROH) (Canadian designation) and /or Certified Industrial Hygienist (CIH) (American designation) when they meet the required criteria of education and work experience.

Functions

- To recognize all loss exposures
- To evaluate these exposures
- To develop plans for controlling the exposures
- To implement these plans
- To monitors the program's effectiveness.

Resources for occupational hygienists in Canada include:

- Canadian Registration Board of Occupational Hygienists (CRBOH):
www.crboh.ca/page.cfm?onumber=1

Safety Professionals

Overview

Safety professionals may have education, training and experience in a variety of areas including: industrial hygiene and toxicology, design of engineering hazard controls, fire protection, ergonomics, system and process safety, safety and health program management, incident investigation and analysis, product safety, construction safety, education and training methods, measurement of safety performance, human behaviour, environmental safety and health, and safety, health and environmental laws, regulations and standards.

Functions of a Safety Professional

The major areas relating to the protection of people, property and the environment are:

- Anticipate, identify and evaluate hazardous conditions and practices.
- Develop hazard control designs, methods, procedures and programs.
- Implement, administer and advise others on hazard control programs.
- Measure, audit and evaluate the effectiveness of hazard control programs.

Resources for safety professionals include:

Canada

- Board of Canadian Registered Safety Professionals: www.acrsp.ca/
- Canadian Society of Safety Engineering (CSSE): www.csse.org/

United States

- American Society of Safety Engineers: www.asse.org/index.html

Ergonomists

Overview

An ergonomist is a professional who “applies theory, principles, data and methods to... optimize human well-being and overall system performance”.¹⁵⁷ These professionals have diverse educational backgrounds, however all have an interest in and work to improving work situations by addressing the “physical, cognitive, social, organizational, environmental and other relevant factors” in the workplace.¹⁵⁷

Resources for ergonomists in Canada include:

- Association of Canadian Ergonomists: www.ace.ergonomist.ca/

International OHS Professional Associations

- Australian College of Occupational Health Nurses (ACOHN) www.acohn.com.au/
- Institution of Occupational Safety and Health (IOSH): www.iosh.org
- International Health Care Worker Safety Center www.healthsystem.virginia.edu/internet/epinet/
- International Network of Safety and Health Practitioner Organizations (INSHPO) www.inshpo.org
- Safety Institute of Australia (SIA): www.sia.org.au