

e-SOHN

RCN Society of Occupational Health Nursing

Summer 2008

Further information

The next issue of e-SOHN will go online in September 2008. Submit your contributions by Friday, 15 August, to the Editor:

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The future is now!

[81 words]

SOHN is leading the way in the exploring the new e-format which will become the standard for all RCN newsletters in the future. We believe this is the right response to communicating with today's nursing community, whether from an environmental standpoint with its paper-free accessibility or in the way it links you instantaneously to a whole range of relevant information in the wide wide world of occupational health nursing. We hope you like it – and, as always, we welcome your comments and suggestions.

[ends]



[caption]
Cynthia Atwell FRCN

SOHN Chair awarded RCN Fellowship

[445 words + pic]

It was a particularly poignant moment for occupational health nursing at Congress this year when Cynthia Atwell became one of the very few of our numbers to have been made a Fellow of the Royal College of Nursing (FRCN). The investiture by RCN President Maura Buchanan is captured on the [2008 RCN Congress webcast](#).

[Read more >](#)

mms://dc1web08.rcn.org.uk/congress08/award_of_merit_winners.wmv

Throughout an illustrious career spanning over 35 years, Cynthia has done so much to raise the profile of occupational health and, in particular, occupational health nursing.

Her extensive knowledge and enabling style have brought about a change in awareness on all issues relating to the health and well-being of those at work, both within the nursing profession and in the wider health and safety community.

At national level

Cynthia was member of the Health and Safety Commission (HSC) from 1996 to 1998 and she remains the only practising nurse ever to have held this prestigious position.

Her more recent work with the Health and Safety Executive OH Compliance Programme Action Group has put her visionary talents to work on identifying ways to implement the aims and objectives of the Government's 10-year strategy, *Securing health together*.

Currently Chair of the RCN Society of Occupational Health Nursing, she has also sat on the Advisory Committee of the Engineering Employers' Federation.

Education and research

Cynthia takes a great deal of interest in occupational health nursing education and she is a visiting lecturer to a number of universities. In 2000, she created an innovative diploma course in occupational health practice at the University of Warwick and she continues to be involved with this course.

Cynthia has also contributed to the body of academic research through the publication of many papers and chapters in specialist texts.

A recognised leader

For a number of years, Cynthia has been involved with the adjudicating panel for the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents Occupational Safety Awards, work which was recognised in their granting her the RoSPA Distinguished Service Award.

She was also ranked at number three by *Occupational Health Magazine* in their list of the 40 most influential people in occupational health - well ahead of the then-Secretary of State for Health, Patricia Hewitt!

Cynthia was also awarded an Honorary Fellowship of the Faculty of Occupational Medicine in 2006.

It is no surprise, then, that the RCN awarded her a Fellowship although, in her usual modest way, Cynthia says she is very touched, but feels the award is in recognition of the wonderful work performed by occupational health nurses everywhere.

I am sure you will join me in giving the heartiest and most sincere congratulations to Cynthia Atwell on winning this prestigious award.

- **Caroline Whittaker**
[ends]



[caption]

Health Secretary Alan Johnson speaking at Congress

2008 RCN Congress, Bournemouth

[434 words + pic]

Unlike recent years, Congress was distinctly short of tears and tantrums this time – the emphasis was on progress thus far and challenges ahead, says Kevin O’Connor, and the SOHN team turned out in force.

Congress week in Bournemouth started on a high for occupational health with [Cynthia Atwell](#) being made a Fellow of the RCN. Cynthia’s long contribution to the world of occupational health was acknowledged by RCN President Maura Buchanan and a short reception was held afterwards at the Royal Bath Hotel.

The SOHN team at Congress this year were Cynthia, Katie Oakley, Caroline Whittaker and myself. Sharon Horan was a guest at the reception on Sunday evening.

The real business week got off to a start on Monday morning with an address from Dr Peter Carter, now in his second year in office. A palpable change in style could be felt between the current General Secretary & Chief Executive and his predecessor, Dr Beverly Malone. Gone were the rousing speeches and much of the emotion - replaced by a straightforward account of progress to date and challenges ahead.

There was applause at the news that the RCN’s financial difficulties had been turned around and that Cavendish Square has been saved. The rest of the address was a very business-like discussion of where the RCN hoped to go over the next year.

Dry-eyed and down to business

Although the debates covered the usual mix of subjects, the business-like approach pervaded the week. There were fewer displays of emotion from the podium, perhaps even a little less passion, and for the first time in a decade no tears following heart rendering stories.

Regular veterans of Congress will be familiar with the regular speakers: the militants and the downright funny characters who beat a steady path to the stage year after year. This year saw a number of these people attending for the last time and, like old soldiers, they were already fading away.

A new era?

The number of point of order cards was way down on the usual level, perhaps due to the mild mannered chairmanship of Jason Warriner. Even the report from Council lasted under an hour and had few questions of clarification.

This was an RCN Congress that had given up the some of the raw emotion that had resulted in a display of anger two years ago with the address by the then-Health Secretary Patricia Hewitt. It has now adopted a certain boardroom etiquette: perhaps it has come of age.

- Kevin O'Connor

See a [webcast of Kev and Cynthia addressing Congress on the image of nurses.](https://www.rcn.org/congress08/resolution_16.wmv)

[mms://dc1-web08.rcn.org.uk/congress08/resolution_16.wmv](https://www.rcn.org/congress08/resolution_16.wmv)

[ends]

Letter from the chair:

RCN restructuring – Latest information on support for our work at the RCN

You are all aware of the changes and re-organisation that are taking place at the RCN. Sharon Horan our OH Adviser was on a temporary contract which has now finished and she has moved on from the RCN. The RCN are currently making an appointment of a new public health adviser. We will be supported by this new appointee in the future and are looking forward to working with them when they are in post.

Professional Membership Structure (PMS)

This is being reviewed, which means forums are to be rationalised and specific criteria are being developed for their operation. With over 76 forums, not all of them sustainable, this change is long overdue.

In SOHN and OHMF, we have two forums for occupational health and I feel confident that there will be at least one specialist forum for occupational health nurses in the new structure. SOHN is a strong, very active forum, but we will not allow ourselves to be complacent.

Christina Butterworth, OHMF Chair, and I are working increasingly closely, including having joint steering committee meetings. During our last meeting the two

committees agreed to propose to the RCN Governance Committee that we should amalgamate and the proposal is to be considered with the PMS rationalisation.

Amalgamation

Being a small speciality, we feel that working together will give us more power and a stronger voice. We are also working very closely with Dame Carol Black to see that OH nurses are leading on the Health, Work and Wellbeing strategy, and we will carry on as usual to make sure we do not lose momentum.

There will not be any elections in 2008 so existing steering committee members will extend their tenure until the new structure is in place. Clearly, our amalgamation will require us to consider a new name and I would be delighted to have your thoughts on this.

There will a period of consultation of the proposals for rationalisation of the forums from July to September, with a final report going to RCN Council in October.

We will keep you informed of actions as soon as we are able to do so, but if you have any concerns in the meantime do not hesitate to contact me at cynthiaatwell@sky.com

- **Cynthia Atwell**

[ends]



OH Adviser Sharon Horan moves on

[216 words + pic]

Sharon Horan, part-time OH Adviser, left the RCN at the end March when her contract was completed.

Many SOHN members know Sharon very well – perhaps you met her at conferences and meetings or sought advice from the RCN on OH matters. She is a very experienced OH nurse who headed up OH services at Mark & Spencer and AON Occupational Health, bringing a wealth of knowledge to her RCN role.

Sharon has worked tirelessly for OH nursing and occupational health in general. She has been working with the RCN President on the Health, Work and Wellbeing Stakeholder Council and has provided an excellent steer in the important work we have been doing with the Department of Work and Pensions and Dame Carole Black.

Thank you

Her support of the SOHN Steering Committee has been exemplary and we will miss her. As a former Chair of SOHN, she understood what we needed and kept us all informed of what was going on, keeping OH high on the agenda.

So a big “thank you, Sharon” for all you have done for us and the OH profession as a whole. We wish you well in your future endeavours.

From everyone on the SOHN Steering Committee.

Cynthia Atwell (Chair)

Bashyr Aziz

Fiona Colegrave

Jane Ingham

Graham Johnson

Kevin O'Connor

Katie Oakley

Caroline Whittaker

[ends]



Delegates got together at RCN headquarters on 6 May to discuss the implications for occupational health nurses of Dame Carol Black's review. Standing, from left, they are: Caroline Whittaker, Helen Kirk, Carol Bannister (Team Leader, RCN Professional Nurse Development Department), Bashyr Aziz, Katie Oakley, Gail Cotton, Jane Ingham and Anne McLeod. Seated, from left: Caroline Minshell, Fiona Colgrave, Christina Butterworth (OHMF Chair), Cynthia Atwell (SOHN Chair) and Kim Boggins (AOHNP Chair).

After the Review ... Time to galvanise the troops!

With the launch of Dame Carol Black's Review of the Health of Britain's Working Age Population, OH nurse leaders are being encouraged to get ready to play an important role in taking this work forward. It's a wonderful opportunity, says Sharon Horan, and those of us involved in the strategic planning are right to be enthusiastic.

In early May, Cynthia Atwell (SOHN Chair), Christina Butterworth (OHMF Chair) and I were invited to meet with Dame Carol to discuss the way ahead. We are pleased that she recognises the role that OH nurses will play and equally delighted that she wants to work with us and solicit our help in engaging with the other identified stakeholders.

While no firm plans can be made until we get ministerial approval, around five weeks from now, throughout the meeting we were encouraged to get as much information together as possible, particularly about OH nurse numbers (which we secured a few days later) and those for nurses with an OH/RMN skill mix.

We were also encouraged to “galvanise the troops” so we would be ready to move forward rapidly with this work once we do get the thumbs-up.

Learn to delegate and lead

While Carol was pleased with the general reception of the Review, she was less pleased with some sectors of the OH community that had already made unrealistic demands in the press regarding a need to increase their numbers!

During the discussion we focused on the need to use OH nursing skills appropriately. Bearing in mind that we are small in numbers, we must delegate work, wherever possible, to OH technicians and others to meet the challenges that the Review poses.

Personally I do not see this as an issue if we are quite clear and focused on what can be undertaken by others, taking on more of a managerial and leadership role ourselves.

Let us not forget that this is a long term strategy and, if we do get the go ahead from Government, various trials will be undertaken to test a range of models of service delivery over the next few years.

Working age but not in work

Meanwhile we hope to get our act together and make sure we possess the skills necessary to lead the multidisciplinary teams that will take this work forward.

One of the big challenges for OH nurses will be to expand our focus to include those of working age who may not be in employment. Looking at it logically, why should this be any different from dealing with the long term sick, which we do now anyway, providing we are prepared to work as part of the team that will ultimately get people into work?

If implemented, this Review will provide such a range of jobs and opportunities in all sorts of health care delivery surrounding the workplace- primary care arena, including vocational rehabilitation, well-being and public health, that we'll be spoilt for choice. There are already signs of this happening.

Unforeseen but exciting times ahead

Providing occupational health advice and treatment for all workers was my RCN Political Leadership topic and, because of the sheer enormity of it, I never really believed I would see it happen.

Dame Carol Black has now made this a distinct possibility with the proposal of the Fit for Work service, which would address health inequalities experienced by SMEs, the self-employed and migrant workers.

I'm glad I'd covered this topic in some depth already. Having explored the risks, workforce planning issues and educational input required certainly prepared me for these unforeseen and exciting events.

One thing's for sure: OH is never boring!

- Sharon Horan
Occupational Health Consultant

You can download the Review and explore related discussions and developments at the new [Working for Health website](http://www.workingforhealth.gov.uk/)
<http://www.workingforhealth.gov.uk/>
[ends]

From the regions: RCN-OHNG-SOUTH WEST

www.rcn-oh-southwest.co.uk

Encouraging universities to take a more practical approach to OH education, designing an interactive website and staging a seriously amusing seminar on depression in the workplace – just a few of the activities the OH Nursing Group – South West have been getting up to in recent months.

Our group is growing in numbers and continues to be involved in key occupational health issues, both locally and nationally.

We have recently carried out an OH training survey in collaboration with the Universities of Plymouth and Bath. Following our survey, Plymouth has agreed to start a part time OH degree course, which will entail one day a week at university instead of the current three days a week, which is impracticable for many. The full time option will still be available for those who can attend three days a week.

Bath is also developing new courses for OH practitioners and we look forward to hearing about these in more detail once they are fully developed.

Improved website

We encourage you to visit our newly enhanced website and use the discussion forum to debate professional issues. This is an ideal way of communicating and sharing best practice with other OH professionals across the country.

Many of the website areas, including the jobs page, can now be updated by members, allowing the website to be more interactive.

“What stress?”

We were delighted with the positive feedback from our most recent study day on 29 April when Martin Davies RMN DipCPN delivered an excellent seminar on managing depression in the workplace.

Martin has co-written *What stress?* for the Royal College of General Practitioners and his illustrations have been published in *Private Eye* and dozens of other publications. His presentation was lively and amusing, while containing serious messages for us all.

Our next study day will be on work-related skin disorders on 9 October at Oake Manor Golf Club, near Taunton.

- Bettina Critchley, Chair

Has your regional group got news to share? Make sure you provide any changes in contact details and updates of websites to the RCN.

[ends]



2008 SOHN Conference:

Putting the wellbeing into work: the new agenda for occupational health

[56 words]

Dame Carol Black heads a distinguished line-up of speakers at the RCN Society of Occupational Health Nursing conference and exhibition on Wednesday-Thursday, 26-27 November 2008 at Southport Theatre and Convention Centre. Share your knowledge, but don't delay - the call for papers ends 4 July! Details and booking information in [the conference flyer](#).

http://www.rcn.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0005/159809/occupational_health_LO.pdf

Endnote from the Editor

[559 words]

The Review of Health at Work by Dame Carol Black is likely to be the start of a new era in occupational health nursing. The challenges are there, but unless we respond to them with positivity and vigour – and unless we are prepared to work collaboratively with others - there will be others who will fill any vacuum left by any uncertainty or procrastination on our part.

That's why it is important for you to read the Review and look in it for opportunities for occupational health nursing. As Cynthia Atwell and Sharon Horan have both stated, your representatives are working very hard to ensure that the contribution of OH nurses will be taken into consideration and acknowledged in any strategy that develops from the Review.

Committee news

Katie Oakley, having completed three years as a member of the SOHN Steering Committee, has decided to step down. She has worked very hard on the committee as our link with NICE and as one of our representatives at the Federation of Occupational Health Nursing in the European Union, to mention just some of her roles.

I know that a new edition of her book is about to go to print and what I know of Katie leaves me in no doubt that she will have a number of other projects up her sleeve. The committee will miss her and we wish her all the best in her new ventures.

Lynda Spear

We were all terribly sad to learn of the sudden, totally unexpected death of Lynda Spear, whose funeral took place on 29 May, just before this newsletter went for publication.

Although I had corresponded frequently with Lynda, I only met her once face to face. At that meeting I was left with the impression of a very chirpy and energetic young lady, who was simply bubbling with enthusiasm for everything to do with occupational health nursing in Wales.

All our thoughts and prayers are with Lynda and her family at this time, and I am hoping to have an obituary for her, written by someone who knew her a lot better than I did, for the next issue.

Your news and views matter

As I remind you with every issue of e-SOHN, this is *your* newsletter and we at SOHN are very keen to receive submissions from you for publication. We are equally keen to have your views and comments about how we could improve the newsletter.

So here's the deal: if you take the trouble to let us know what you want to see, we promise to do our best to comply with your wishes. My contact details are on the main page so get writing!

- Bashyr Aziz
Editor
[ends]

We like to keep you informed about services, campaigns, events, publications and new initiatives. It is also important for us to find out your views on a range of issues to help inform our policy and campaign work and provide you with a better membership service. This may be by post or electronically.

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