

Occupational Health for Health Care Professionals: Caring for the Carers

Editors: G Jayakumar, M Retneswari

Malaysian Medical Association, 4th Floor, MMA House, 124, Jalan Pahang, 53000 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

This book that has been edited by Dr G Jayakumar and Dr M Retneswari, and possibly the first in the Asia Pacific region, will be a valuable resource to Occupational Health and Health Care practitioners alike. As mentioned in the Foreword, this book aims to take into account the well being of healthcare professionals and this makes this book unique in approach as most text books focus on the recipients of health care, and never usually on the providers of this healthcare. This book more than adequately deals with the numerous areas of concern to healthcare workers, drawing not only from the expertise of the two editors but also the many experts that have contributed to this book.

The book is presented in 22 chapters, with 30 authors contributing to the book. The first chapter written by the two editors gives an overview of the occupational health concerns of health care workers, with emphasis on occupational hazards and globalisation impacts as illustrated by effects of the SARS outbreak recently on health care professionals. Hence, right from the outset, this book is set out to be appealing to a wide readership around the globe.

Legislation pertaining to notification of accidents, dangerous occurrence, occupational poisoning and occupational diseases, including the safety and health committee is the focus of the next chapter. Placing this chapter early in the book is commendable as legislations are important in occupational safety and any health management system. The chapter that follows provides useful practical information on another important area, namely pre-employment health assessment for health care professionals.

Infectious diseases, and preventing or minimizing risks to these are important to health care professionals. The next three chapters, in addressing these cover infection control, occupational blood-borne infections and occupational respiratory diseases. A useful chapter on needle stick injuries follows with emphasis on prevention and control, role of prophylactic treatment and immunization and guidelines for HIV post exposure prophylaxis. Next, is a chapter on types of occupation skin diseases and their management including prevention of these in health care professionals.

Work related musculo skeletal disorders especially among those handling patients are of concern. The next chapter supported with illustrations addresses this as well as also the risk of this among other categories of health care professionals in hospitals. A related chapter on musculo skeletal risk factors among computer keyboard diseases appears in a later chapter of this book. It may have been

better to have these two chapters back to back as they are related.

Reproductive occupational health hazards, anaesthetic gases and health care professionals, and medical imaging hazards are covered in the three chapters that follow. These are relevant in a textbook of this nature and will be especially useful to those practicing in these fields. Those serving in dental health care facilities will be pleased to see the next chapter that extensively deals with hazards faced at these facilities.

Two areas widely of concern to Health Care Professionals are shift work and stress. The two chapters that cover these contain valuable and useful information to not only understand these but also as to how to avoid the problems that are associated.

In the final chapters, chemical usage, laboratory health and safety and personal protective equipment are presented that will widen the readership of this book. The chapter on the important topic of indoor air quality in health care facilities will be relevant to management and workers alike. A chapter that is in the book on the conduct of a walk through survey and its purpose will be a valuable overview and guide to those wishing to undertake this. The last chapter, quite rightly, goes into an area that health care professions find themselves in sometimes, namely medical relief missions. The hazards exposed to and protection of health care professionals in these missions is adequately presented in this chapter with attractive illustrations.

References are located at the end of each chapter, while two appendices give samples of notification forms and a third appendix provides the algorithm for transferring patients between bed, chair, toilet and car.

An impressive range of expert authors have contributed on a wide range of important topics on the theme of this text. Probably in the next edition the editors could give attention to health risk assessment that appears to have been dealt with somewhat in passing. Nevertheless the editors need to be commended for putting this book together that will be useful to not only health care professionals and those in management but also to students. We look for regular updates of this book, the usefulness of which will be beyond the Asia-Pacific region.

**Reviewed by Professor Dr John T Arokiasamy
Melaka-Manipal Medical College
Melaka**