Auditor’s training for OHNPs

WHY AN AUDITOR’S COURSE?
Since 2002 the SASOHN Occupational Health Nursing Practitioner (OHNP) of the year award has been awarded to practitioners who excel in terms of occupational health nursing (OHN) service delivery. The ability to make this award is dependent on the auditing of practitioners using a SASOHN-developed audit tool. A concern raised in recent years is the lack of skills amongst SASOHN members to provide auditors for these assessments. This lack of skills has been pronounced in the smaller regions and regions distanced from tertiary institutions that provide OHN training. To address this, SASOHN consulted with an auditing expert and, in consultation with this expert, has developed an auditor’s training course for OHNPs focused on the ability to identify and evaluate nominees for the practitioner of the year award. The course was developed using SANS/ISO 19011:2012 as the foundation, as well as the ICOH Code of Ethics and the South African Nursing Council (SANC) competency framework for OHNPs.

COURSE DESIGN
The training was developed to be conducted over two days and included a pre-course assessment of knowledge and understanding of the existing SASOHN audit tool. The tool (G3 - Audit criteria for the OHNP of the year award) is available to all SASOHN members on the SASOHN website. The pre-course assessment ensured that candidates were familiar with the audit tool prior to training and the selection criteria ensured that candidates were knowledgeable in occupational health nursing practice. This allowed the course to be focused on the “how” of audit skills rather than teaching “what to look for” in an audit. Strict selection criteria for candidates were set, based on experience and qualifications in OHN to ensure competent delegates were selected. These criteria included that all candidates:
- are currently employed in occupational health,
- hold SANC recognised post basic qualifications in OHN,
- have been paid up SASOHN members for the past five years,
- are active members in their regions,
- have a minimum of 5 years’ experience in occupational health,
- have a minimum of 2 years’ experience in internal auditing, and
- provided proof of involvement in a health and safety management system.

PILOT STUDY
A pilot study was conducted in June 2013 in which a select group of 14 members from eight of the SASOHN regions was included in the training. Delegates were: K Michell (coordinator); N de Jager and A Butkovic (Gauteng); A Davis and D Minnie (West Rand); T Vos (Mphumalanga); K Davies (Pretoria); D Smith, Z Mxosa and M Pillay (Port KZN); K Prinsloo and K Villiers (Vaal); S Severn (Inland KZN) and J Klaasen (Eastern Cape).

These members were identified by the SASOHN Executive Committee for their experience and knowledge in occupational health, as well as their involvement with SASOHN at a regional level. As this was a pilot study, all delegates were sponsored. As the pilot group was fully sponsored, candidates were required to commit to completing an annual audit on behalf of SASOHN for the next three years.

The intention of the training is to empower the regions so that they have the skills to audit candidates and assist members to improve standards, where necessary, so that they may be eligible for entry into the OHNP of the year award in the future. During the course, the selection criteria, content material and duration of the course were evaluated by the candidates. The material that was presented met the mark but a number of the delegates had no prior experience with implementing the tool. Based on this, the final consensus was to increase the course duration to three days and to allow more discussion on the implementation of the tool. In addition, it will be necessary for SASOHN to develop a guideline for the implementation of this tool for less experienced auditors and to ensure standardised interpretation and implementation.

Candidates are all required to complete an audit for evaluation in order to be declared competent. They will be conducting these audits in pairs during July and August 2013 in their respective regions. It is anticipated that an additional seven delegates will be available for consideration for the OHNP of the year award this year – meeting one of the course objectives. Once course delegates have been declared competent, they will conduct one audit a year for the next two years. In 2014 they will serve as mentors for the next group of delegates selected to attend the course, which will assist in increasing the skills base for evaluation of the occupational health services, both for the SASOHN award and development purposes. It was agreed that all delegates feel this objective has been achieved as they will conduct the upcoming audits with confidence.

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