Phasing in OREPs effectively and easily

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For a long time now the Nirvana of managing health and safety has been the effective implementation of Occupational Risk Exposure Profiling (OREP). Previously referred to as Man Job Specifications, the term OREP has evolved to better describe the objective of these specifications. So often though, efforts to implement OREP fail, principally because:
1. Some of them are paper-based and are therefore difficult to access and become redundant fast.
2. More often though they are Excel-based and fail when the custodians/creators of these spreadsheets leave, consequently falling into disuse or simply disappearing.
3. Those that are based on properly developed software are simply not implemented well.

This article serves to illustrate just how easy it is to implement OREP if it is done in a phased manner using a properly designed database with an intuitive, easy to use user interface— in other words, a good software program. To illustrate this, we shall use ClinicSister as the software platform but the approach illustrated will work with any software solution, provided the software selected is stable and easy to use.

PHASING VERSUS BIG BANG
What Big Bang means is taking the pain of change in one massive, tortuous hit. There are times when this works but OREP implementation is not one of these: the path to success lies in implementing them incrementally, in phases, as and when ready.

Purists will argue that this delays the process of implementing OREP but one has to bear in mind that so many organisations have tried for so long to implement them with little success that taking even a year to complete such a project is an effective solution and, most important of all, painless.

CONVENTIONAL STAGES OF IMPLEMENTING OREP
Convention has it that:
1. An occupational hygiene survey is done.
2. The Homogeneous Exposure Groups (HEGs) are identified.
3. The occupational risk exposure profile of the HEG is then associated with the job or area.
4. The OREPs are then used to determine who is to work where, using what PPE, and with what exclusions/recommendations.

On a regular basis, or when a new risk is brought into the workplace, a new survey is conducted and the process is started again. HEGs and OREPs are never static and will change from time to time, either because of changes in legislation or simply because the work done or products manufactured change. With that in mind, it is easy to see how paper- or spreadsheet-based systems fail, but more of that later.

PHASING IN OCCUPATIONAL RISK EXPOSURE PROFILES
Man Job Specifications (OREP) are now an essential part of a Medical Certificate of Fitness for the Construction Industry and it is the responsibility of the employer to provide information on the job requirements, exposures and PPE to be used. There is no doubt, too, that this will, in the near future, be extended to other industries.

There has been some fairly heated debate around this amongst our ClinicSister users and some of the points raised are quite compelling:
1. There is no expiry date detailed on the example in Annexure 3. Users pointed out that, without an expiry date, a Certificate of Fitness (CoF) could be abused.
2. Some users were also adamant that there should be a list of all the tests carried out on the CoF, confidential data excluded.
3. Others wished to list any restrictions to be applied.
4. There are instances where OHNPs deem an employee temporarily fit, temporarily unfit, or simply unfit. Whilst there is a strong argument for issuing a CoF only if someone is found to be fully fit, some ClinicSister users felt that it was important that a certificate be issued even for other outcomes. This is a point we know could be debated at great length but the reasons put forward have been quite compelling.

We used the requirements of the Occupational Health and Safety Act and the feedback we received from the ClinicSister user community to create a flexible CoF which will meet most needs. The CoF also incorporates the features and content previously available.

A key factor underpinning this was the fact that no database changes had to be made to achieve our
Objective. ClinicSister users will be aware that ClinicSister has had Man Job Specifications (OREP) as a feature for a number of years so the challenge was actually around the reporting more than anything else:

1. We had to incorporate the Man Job Specs (OREP) into the CoF to meet the requirements of the new amendment.
2. Many ClinicSister users like the features within the existing CoF so these had to be retained somehow.
3. We had to allow the user to decide what to incorporate and what to omit.
4. With that came the challenge to ensure that any CoF does not print with gaping holes where the user has omitted some sections he/she feels are unnecessary.

Pictured above are the new ClinicSister options. The first example has more detail.

The second example is one where the user has elected to meet only the requirements as outlined in Annexure 3 but the expiry date has been included.

SAVING TIME, ENSURING CONSISTENCY AND ELIMINATING RISK

Once the Man Job Spec (OREP) has been set up for any designation, it is applied automatically each time the user does a CoF. This not only saves an enormous amount of time, it also ensures consistency. You avoid risk too:

1. When an employee changes jobs, the new OREP is automatically applied.
2. When an OREP is changed, it is automatically applied when next a CoF is done on someone with that job description.
3. The Man Job Specs (OREP) applied at the time the medical was done are recorded permanently so any changes made to OREPs or changes in jobs do not affect the history.
4. The Enterprise version of ClinicSister accommodates OREPs for both occupations and sites, thus a driver from a specific site will have a combination of OREPs for both his job and the site.