

From the editor...



Linda Grainger,
Editor

Holidays are always welcome; however they also come at a 'cost'. The amount of work to be done remains the same, but the time in which to accomplish it is reduced. This is especially problematic for self-employed practitioners. So, whilst the recent break was probably enjoyable, many of you are likely to be trying to catch up on outstanding tasks now. I hope that despite your busyness, you will find that the time spent on reading this issue of our journal will be worthwhile.

Worksite wellness programmes are known to improve the physical work capacity and accelerate the return to work of high-risk employees declared unfit for duty. However, there has been a lack of research to determine whether a worksite wellness programme could positively influence the physical work capacity profile of workers in physically demanding jobs. In response to this, Lubbe, Malan, Wilders and Ellis describe a quasi-experimental study that measured the impact of such a programme on electricity supply company workers. Although this is in effect a pilot study, the results are encouraging and support the need for wider studies.

The problem of occupationally related pesticide poisoning is certainly endemic and significant in South Africa. The under-reporting of information required to determine the size of the problem has been well documented over the past years. Tattersall, Clarke and Marais describe the findings of a study that investigated the reporting and follow-up of cases of agricultural pesticide poisonings in the Boland District of the Western Cape, the factors that contributed to the poisoning cases, and whether a biological monitoring programme was in place at the time. The lack of improvement since previous studies is quite clear. The notification of agricultural chemical poisoning was applied in a fragmentary manner between the different governmental levels and departments and the degree of completeness of the information reported was very poor.

Gazi, Rees, Kgalamono and Murray report on an interesting case of silicosis and progressive massive fibrosis with uncertain occupational exposure to silica. This case study is important as it shows that although heavy exposure is thought to be necessary for the development of an occupational disease, the disease may occur at low levels of exposure.

Michell presents the results of the SASOHN remuneration survey that was recently conducted by Deloitte Consulting. Although the sample was small, the results are most interesting. There is an extremely wide variation in the number of employees for whom OH services are provided, with the ratios of nurse to worker ranging from 40:1 to 3000:1. A further notable result was that there is little consistency in the rates being charged in relation to the levels of competence or geographical location. The study clearly indicates the need for further research to determine norms for nurse:worker ratios.

The issue of child labour is a concern that has been receiving growing attention. South Africa has joined with the International Labour Organisation to create the programme Towards the Elimination of worst forms of Child Labour (TECL) as a technical resource for the development and activation of national child labour programmes. Visit their website for more information (<http://www.child-labour.org.za>), and help with the problem.

In closing, a reminder! Ensure that you have set the planning for your attendance at ICOH 2009 in motion. This is an opportunity that you cannot miss. The calendar and the SASOM page contain useful details.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Linda Grainger". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above a horizontal line.