

ACADEMIC FORUM FOR OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH & MEDICINE

Notes of a meeting held on Tuesday 9th October at the Society of Occupational Medicine

Present: Professor Ewan Macdonald (EM) – chair; Dr Kaveh Asanati, Michael Whitmore, Professor Anne Harris, Dr Sharon Stevelink, Nick Pahl

Dialled in: Dr Sotiris Vardoulakis, Dr Gwenllian Wynne-Jones

Apologies: Professor Martie Van Tongeren, Professor Karen Walker-Bone, Dr Sara De Matteis, Jackie Douglas, Pam Keshavarzian, Dr Gordon Jackson-Koku, Dr Ira Madan, Professor Martie Van Tongeren, Dr Joanna Yarker, Professor Ralph Fevre

1. Introduction and Minutes

EM welcomed the group and reviewed the minutes of the last meeting, which were agreed.

He noted the history of the forum and said it was nonaligned and multidisciplinary.

EM said that Nick Pahl and he had met with Professor Sir Tony Newman Taylor (TNT) recently regarding advocacy opportunities for occupational health (OH) research. It was agreed that OH research had a key role in providing evidence based research that responded and forecast key issues such as:

- an ageing population
- worklessness and
- biopsychosocial issues to workplace health

TNT offered to raise the issue of lack of capacity in OH Research with the Chief Scientist and Professor Sir Mansell Aylward. A discussion occurred on influence e.g. the role of Dr Ira Madan at NIHR, how Dame Carol Black can assist and the Institute of Occupational Medicine on advising on research calls.

There was disappointment that a previous DWP call for an academic centre for work and health had been stopped 2 weeks before interview and a recent ESRC bid from Kings for a mental health at work centre had not progressed to funding.

There was also concern about the decline in the academic base in OH nursing e.g. with the LSBU course stopping and limited OH nurse training (currently only at Brunel, UWE, University of Deby, Teesside and University of West of Scotland).

2. Matters arising

EM said that a Delphi exercise on OH research priorities had recently been published in the JOEM (link to be circulated). He noted that evidence based interventions were a key issue, particularly those that have a cost-effectiveness component.

EM - Follow up paper on research capacity to be produced.

Other matters arising:

- National centre / virtual centre to collect the best advice and a trusted source of information for occupational health- to be discussed below
- Agreed needed to continue linking with OH nurses, Occupational Hygiene and psychology and occupational therapy disciplines to expand the forum
- Re Colt – NP to follow up with JD
- Agreed to continue circulating funding opportunities
- SOM is updating the work and health unit with information about the academic forum's activity and purpose (to circulate these minutes)
- The meeting of the UK & Ireland Occupational and Environmental Epidemiology Society on 1st and 2nd April 2019 in Edinburgh was noted

3. Academic Forum contact list - circulated

This was agreed, although *edits offered from RAND and IOM. NP to update*

4. Updates

EM and NP are a member of the DWP/DH OH expert group which has met x3 (minutes not available). It was hoped a coherent vision for OH is put into practice and the forum thought that a dedicated knowledge management strategy was required to ensure learning from the past is put into place.

Noted that EM and NP had met with the Deputy CMO, who chairs the OH expert group, to put the case for OH research. No specific actions emerged

NP stated the SOM was hosting with ROSPA an event on 13th November at the Scottish Parliament. EM stated he was attending and asked for details of invitees and noted that he was a member of the Health and work Advisory Group.

EM/ NP/ SV Agreed to meet 3.30-5pm at Edinburgh on 13th November as pre meet

It was noted that the IOM and RAND are working with EUOSHA on a prevention/ MSD campaign in 2020

Also noted new research work of Kings with data from DWP and similarities with fit note data analysis at Keele.

5 An Academic Centre for Work and Health

It was agreed that investment in academic departments in the UK was required after a period of sustained decline. The forum was pleased to see that there was ambition by centres in Kings and Imperial to grow. However, it was thought that a national centre of

excellence was also important to both inform and advise Government such as DWP/DH and would be multidisciplinary and collaborative.

It was pleased to hear that the SOM had been notified that the HSE are to fund a report into the value of OH research. Further details tbc. NP stated he hoped the report could be launched by the SOM Patron, Lord Blunkett, at the Houses of Parliament with research funders present.

Agreed to establish a working group to formulate a concept note and advocacy plan.

Working group consist of EM, Dr Ira Madan, Michael Whitmore, Professor Anne Harris, Dr Sharon Stevelink, Nick Pahl and Dr Kaveh Asanati

Next meeting of Forum - January 14th 10-1pm at SOM