

Careers in Occupational Health

Prof Anne Harriss

Emeritus Professor Occupational Health

Past President Society of Occupational Medicine

A multitude of reasons to make a career in occupational health

Work in diverse settings

- Manufacturing
- Construction
- Travel industry – including hotels and airlines
- Consultancies – from small, medium to large providers
- City Institutions
- Pharmaceutical industry
- Oil and gas
- Opportunity for developing your own business
- NHS
- Entertainment and the arts – eg Royal Ballet, National Theatre

Practice

- Every day can be different
- Breadth of knowledge including:
 - public health,
 - effects of hazards on health and effective control measures
 - employment and health and safety legislation,
- Member of a (multi-disciplinary) team or working as a lone practitioner
- Autonomous, specialist practice
- Can be challenging – frequently having to think on your feet
- Opportunities for flexible working

Awareness of hazards, their effects, control and statutory health surveillance

- Physical
- Chemical
- Biological
- Mechanical
- Ergonomic
- Psycho-social

Through the lenses of a health professional– what do you think of?



• Workplace hazards



Handling heavy/unwieldy loads

- Exposure to high levels of noise
- Vehicle movements
- Extremes of weather conditions
- Slippery floor surfaces in the wet or snow

- Moving and handling heavy equipment (floor sanding)
- Noise
- Vibration
- Chemicals – varnishes, waxes, solvents
- Hard wood dust

So if OH is the career for you – the next steps

- Identify transferable skills from your current or previous job roles
 - If making a career move you may have worked as a nurse in general practice with experience in travel health
- Work on securing a post – OH services in the NHS are a good starting point – many are training posts with funding for training in the specialism
- Think about educational needs required for competent specialist practice in OH
 - For nurses: NMC approved (SCPHN) programmes – see NMC website
 - For all health professionals: occupational health programmes at degree/post - graduate level eg University of Cumbria (Non-NMC); RGU, Workplace Health and Wellbeing (D/L) University of Nottingham
 - FOM Diploma in Occupational Health Practice (short course) – introduces to OH
 - Join SOM and iOH – they have lots of resources including webinars and support groups

Priscilla's career pathway

- Theatre nurse - made a career move following a significant body fluid exposure incident at the operating table.
- Started working in Guys and St. Thomas OH service as an agency nurse then sponsored on the London South Bank University BSc (Hons) OH course.
- After qualifying:
 - 2005-2006:** Citigroup investment bank – OH Specialist Advisor
 - 2006-2009:** Wandsworth prison OH Manager
- **2009-2017** – OH Manager Harrods
- **2017-2019:** National OH Lead for Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMMPS)
- **2019 – present:** Head of OH and EAP, Ministry of Justice (England and Wales)
- **2023** -graduated with MSc Public Leadership 2020-2023.
Next steps: the sky's the limit

Helen's OH journey

- Career ED nurse on track to lead her own department by the age of 30
- Then had an ED career ending car accident – so moved to OH
- Post in a print works –trained to be an OHN then transferred to an NHS OH service
- Large OH provider – worked in financial/legal sectors
- Senior OHA for Virgin Atlantic (13 years)
- Returned to NHS managed a v large OH service
- And now – back to *Virgin Atlantic* managing external contracts for OH and travel health.

- **University of Nottingham (D/L)**
<https://www.nottingham.ac.uk/pgstudy/course/taught/workplace-health-and-wellbeing-msc>
- **University of Cumbria (D/L)**
<https://www.cumbria.ac.uk/study/courses/cpd-and-short-courses/occupational-health-practice-development-uad/>

- **Robert Gordon University (Aberdeen) (D/L)**
<https://www.rgu.ac.uk/study/courses/1120-bsc-occupational-health>