The Roles of the Occupational Health Nurse — So Many Opportunities!

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Objectives

1. Identify 5 roles of the occupational health nurse
2. List 5 types of workplaces employing OHNs
3. Discuss the skills and resources necessary to provide successful occupational safety and health programs
4. Describe hazard recognition and methods of controls used in abatement of hazards
5. Discuss licensure, OSHA, Standards, and compliance

What is Occupational and Environmental Health Nursing?

- The nursing specialty practice that provides for and delivers health and safety programs and services to workers, worker populations, and community groups.
- The practice focuses on
  - promotion and restoration of health,
  - prevention of illness and injury, and
  - protection from work-related and environmental hazards.
- Requires specialized knowledge, skills, and independent decision-making

Occupational and Environmental Health Nurses (OEHN)

- Occupational and environmental health nurses (OEHNs) have a combined knowledge of health and business that they blend with healthcare expertise to balance the requirement for a safe and healthful work environment with a “healthy” bottom line.
Who Are the OEHNs?

- Nurses licensed by the State in which they practice, or covered by the Nurse Licensure Compact
  - Advanced Practice Registered Nurse (APRN)/Nurse Practitioner (NP)
  - Registered Nurse (RN)
  - Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN)/Licensed Vocational Nurse (LVN)

OEHN Roles are Structured by

- Licensed in the state where the employee is working - where care is provided
  - Nurse Licensure Compact - enhanced...
- State Nurse Practice Act
- Scope of Practice
- Educational preparation
- Skills/AAOHN Competencies
- Organization policies/procedures
- AAOHN Code of Ethics
- AAOHN Standards of Practice
- Confidentiality

Why Are There Laws Regulating Nursing?

- The risk of harm is inherent in the provision of nursing care.
- The state, through monitoring by the BON, is required to protect its citizens from harm.
  - Reasonable laws to regulate nursing
  - State legislatures delegate many to state administrative agencies
  - In the nursing profession states delegate enforcement activities to boards of nursing to protect the public, not the nurses


Why Nurses Need to Know About the NPA

- The practice of nursing is a right granted by a state to protect those who need nursing care.
- NPA guidelines and rules provide safe parameters within nurses work, as well as protect patients from unprofessional and unsafe nursing practice.
- The NPA is a dynamic document that evolves and is updated or amended as changes in scope of practice occur. SBN interprets the NPA.
- The laws of the nursing profession can only function properly if nurses know the current laws governing practice in their state.
- Ignorance of the law is never an excuse!
AAOHN Code of Ethics

- Guides the conduct and practices of OEHNs
- Focuses on promotion and restoration of health, prevention of illness and injury and protection from occupational and environmental hazards
- Supports unrestricted human dignity and rights
- Safeguards rights to privacy and confidentiality
- Promotes collaboration with other professionals, community agencies, and stakeholders
- Requires individual competence in nursing practice
- Complies with appropriate laws and regulations

AAOHN Competencies

- Provide the basis for scope of practice, knowledge, skills, and the legal and ethical framework in OEHN.
- The assumption is predicated on the fact that the nurse is competent in general nursing because the individual is a licensed nurse and has general nursing experience.
- Manages Total Worker Health independently and with other team members
- Demonstrates understanding of the business climate and its impact on the health of the community
- Practices culturally-appropriate, evidence-based nursing care within licensed scope of practice

OEHN Responsibilities

Legal and regulatory compliance
- Licensure
- State and federal regulations
  - Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA)
  - Medical Surveillance
  - Recordkeeping
  - Documentation
- Laws that affect the workplace
  - Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA)
  - Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA)
  - Americans with Disability Act (ADA)
  - Others

OH&S Interdisciplinary Partners

- Occupational Medicine Physician
- Occupational Health Nurse/NP
- Industrial Hygienist
- Safety Professional
Interdisciplinary Collaboration
Occupational Health and Safety Team

SAFETY

NURSING

INDUSTRIAL
HYGIENE

MEDICINE

Adjunct Health and Safety Staff
- Environmental Health Specialist
- Occupational Psychologist
- EAP
- Technicians - Lab, Audiometric, Spirometry, Respirator Fit-testers, Exposure monitors
- First Aiders/EMTs
- Physical therapists, Occupational therapists
- Rehabilitation nurses, Case managers
- Consultants
- Medical Specialties

Ancillary OH&S Team
- Management
- Employees
- Human Resources
- Workers’ Compensation Adjusters
- Facilities Maintenance
- Purchasing
- Vendors
- Professional Resources

Factors Affecting OEHN Roles
- Mission and vision of company
- Commitment of management - budget
- Number of employees
- Staffing of OH Unit
- Expertise of OEHN
- Other members of OH team
- Operations/work processes
- Work Environment - changes
Roles of the OEHN depend on....

- Business resources that support
  - Occupational vs. Non-occupational injuries/illnesses
  - Total Worker Health (TWH) Programs
  - Health Risk Appraisals
  - Wellness/Exercise/Immunization Programs
  - Family health needs
  - Community outreach

OEHN Work Environment
- Corporate
- Industrial/Manufacturing
- Office
- Remote telecommunication
- On-site employee/contract
- Vendored off-site services
- Private MD or NP practice

AAOHN MEMBERS WORK AREAS
- Manufacturing: 953
- Hospital/Medical Center/Independent Medical: 743
- On-Site Medical Clinic: 526
- Government/Military: 276
- Insurance/Finance: 138
- Educational Organization: 109
- General Business: 86
- Transportation/Communication: 84
- Agriculture: 50
- Retail/wholesale: 37
- Construction: 24
- Mining: 22

Roles of the OHN
- Manager
- Clinical Practitioner
- OH Services Coordinator
- Program Manager
- Case Manager
- Disability Manager
- Educator/Trainer
- Advisor/Counselor/Coach
- Health Promotion/Wellness Specialist
- Researcher
- Consultant
OEHN Roles

Manager/OH Services
- Program development
- Human Resources activities
- Supervisor/team members
- Policies/Procedures
- Advisor to upper management
- Ensure quality services

OEHN Roles

Clinical Practitioner
- Provides direct care for occupational and non-occupational injuries and illnesses
- Emergency Responder
- Monitors potential hazards:
  - biological, chemical, environmental, mechanical, physical, and psychosocial
  - Injury and illness data
- Medical surveillance
- Confidentiality
- Employee Advocate

OEHN Roles

Clinical Practitioner
- Physical Assessment
- Treatment (Standing Orders/protocols)
- Counseling
- Referrals
- Communication with management
- Work accommodations
- Return-To-Work

OEHN Roles

Educator and Mentor
- Employees
- Management
- Colleagues
- Family
- Community
- Healthcare Providers
OEHN Responsibilities
Counseling and crisis intervention
• Work-related/personal illnesses and injuries
• Substance abuse/Psychosocial needs referrals
• Wellness/health promotion concerns
• Other concerns that inhibit ability to work and live productively
• Responsibility for managing employee assistance programs (EAP)
• Referrals to other community resources
• Coordinate follow-up

OEHN and Work-relatedness
• Understands the workplace, hazards, and effects on workers
• Knowledgeable in States’ Workers’ Compensation laws and rehabilitation guidelines
• Understands OSHA Recordability
• Provides work restrictions based on capabilities
• Identifies job accommodations for early Return-to-Work to appropriate jobs

OEHN Roles
• Program Manager/Administrator
• Manage occupational health and safety programs
  • Voluntary Health Assessments
  • Screenings – BP, diabetes, weight, stress
  • Workers’ Compensation
  • Disability management
  • Wellness
  • Ergonomics
  • OSHA-mandated

Providing OHS Services
• Implementation methods
• Evaluation of services and programs
  • Measured Outcomes
  • Numbers participating
    • Cost-effectiveness
    • Impact on the employees
    • Return on Investment
• Documentation
• Share with Management / ROI
Providing OHS Services

- Planning Programs and Services
  - Mission and Vision
  - Types of Services
  - Resources/Budget
  - Method of delivering services
    - Onsite – Contract, Organization employees
    - Offsite contract
  - Policies and Procedures supported
  - Recordkeeping system
  - Job description-specific

- ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act)
  - Essential functions of the job
  - Reasonable accommodations
  - Preplacement testing same for same jobs

- FMLA (Family Medical Leave Act)
  - ≥ 50 employees
  - Serious health conditions of self or family
  - 12 weeks/year
  - Job or equiv./benefits are maintained

OHS Programs

- Workers’ Compensation
  - Show me the $ Money coverage
    - Compensation for lost time work
    - Payment of medical fees
    - Other costs and settlements

- State-specific coverage and rules
  - State may allow you to choose providers
  - Types of injuries/illnesses covered
  - May require attorney consent to talk with employee

OEHN Roles

Case Manager
- Coordinates health care services
- Provides appropriate HCP referrals
- Focuses on quality outcome
- Facilitates safe return to work
- Job accommodation/ADA
- Workers’ Compensation requirements
- Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA)
- Cost-effective care/treatment
- Short-term/long-term disability benefits
OEHN Roles
Health Promotion Specialist
• Develops comprehensive health promotion programs
• Management of program
• Focuses on prevention/optimal health
• Demonstrates Return on Investment

OEHN Responsibilities
Health promotion/risk reduction
• Support positive lifestyle changes and individual efforts to lower risks of disease and injury
• Create an environment providing balance among work, family, personal, health, and psychosocial concerns
• Implement prevention strategies including:
  • Immunization,
  • Smoking cessation,
  • Exercise/fitness,
  • Nutrition and weight control,
  • Stress management,
  • Monitoring of chronic diseases,
  • Effective use of healthcare services, etc.

Providing OHS Services
• Health Promotion Programs – the Need!
• Data and Trends
  • Insurance claims
  • Injuries and illnesses
  • First Aid visits
  • Needs Assessments
• Specific to the workplace demographics
• Incentive programs – may be limitations
• Measurements and Outcomes
• Return on Investment

OEHN Roles
Consultant
• Resource person
• Assists in development/evaluation of programs and services

Researcher/Author
• Add to scientific data
• Used for changes in programs, policies, and procedures
CHEMICAL & DUST HAZARDS
(cleaning products, pesticides, asbestos, etc.)

BIOLOGICAL HAZARDS
(mold, insects/pests, communicable diseases, etc.)

ERGONOMIC HAZARDS
(repetition, lifting, awkward postures, etc.)

WORK ORGANIZATION HAZARDS
Things that cause STRESS!

SAFETY HAZARDS
(slips, trips and falls, faulty equipment, etc.)

PHYSICAL HAZARDS
(noise, temperature extremes, radiation, etc.)

OSHA Standards and Compliance

Occupational Safety & Health Act of 1970

- OSH Administration – Regulatory
  - Standards
  - Enforcement
  - US Dept. of Labor (DOL)
- National Institute for Occupational Safety & Health (NIOSH)
  - Research and Training
  - Funding (Education and Research Centers traineeships)
  - US Dept. of Health & Human Services (DHHS)
  - Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC)
- Occupational Safety and Health Review Commission (OSHRC)
  - Independent federal agency, provides admin. trial and appellate review to decide contests of citations or penalties from OSHA inspections.

Providing OHS Services
- Regulatory Compliance
  - Federal OSHA vs. State Plan OSHA
    - www.osha.gov/dcsp/osp/faq.html#oshaprogram
  - OSHA Standards that apply
    - State is "at least as effective" as Federal
  - OSHA General Duty Clause
    - Used without a specific standard
    - Safe and Healthy work environment
  - Other regulatory agencies that apply
    - EPA, MSHA, RR, FAA, Shipbuilding, Maritime

Hazard Assessment
- Workplace Walkthrough
- Policies and Procedures Review
- OSHA Standards for workplace, tools, equipment, and processes
- Injury and Illness Reports
  - Workers Compensation claims
  - OSHA 300 Log
  - First report of Injury for WC
  - Near misses
  - First Aid logs
- Hazardous procedures or exposures
Hierarchy of Controls

- Elimination/Substitution
  - Requires a physical change to the workplace
- Engineering Controls
  - Requires a physical change to the workplace
- Administrative Controls including Work Practices
  - Requires worker or employer to do something
- Personal Protective Equipment
  - Requires worker to wear something

Most Effective

Providing OHS Services

- Personal Protective Equipment
  - Medical Clearance/Surveillance
    - Respirators
    - Hearing protection
    - Specific hazards
  - Appropriate for Hazard
    - Eye protection
    - Chemical/Protective clothing
    - Safety shoes
    - Gloves
    - Head protection
    - Shields

OSHA Records

- Records required
  - Injury and illness (OSHA Forms 300, 300A, 301)
  - Exposures to toxic substances and hazardous (radiation, chemicals, noise)
  - Physical examination reports
  - Employment records
  - Training documentation
  - Written program
- Maintained 30 years + employment
- Access to Medical Records 29 CFR 1910.10(a)

Occupational Health Records

Documentation

- Secured/Confidential
- When providing a service for employees
- Follow the accepted standards
- Separate work-related from personal info
- Access to Medical Records
  - Written request, Within 15 days
  - Watch out what you say... professional, objective, and relative, not judgmental
Conclusions - OH&S Team

- Each member has specific contributions, strengths and skills that depend on the preparation and Scope of Practice
- Each follows legal and regulatory mandates
- All must interact and support each other to achieve the ultimate goal – Healthy and Safe workers and work environment

Summary of OEHN Roles

1. Many roles and responsibilities are assigned to the OHN that depend on the organization's mission and funding available that must follow the legal authority.
2. Development of knowledge and skills is necessary to provide successful OH&S programs and ensure OHN practice competencies.
3. The OEHN collaborates and partners with other disciplines and team members to provide the safe and healthy work environment and workforce
4. Early hazard recognition and abatement of hazards reduce injuries and illnesses.
5. Early assessment and treatment of injuries and illnesses ensure the best chance of reducing disability and maintaining quality production.
6. Compliance with standards, laws, and regulations protect the OEHN, the worker, the management, and the bottom line.

Resources

American Association of Occupational Health Nurses  
www.aaohn.org
American College of Occupational and Environmental Medicine  
www.acoem.org
American Nurses Association  
www.ana.org
American Industrial Hygiene Association  
www.aiha.org
American Society of Safety Engineers  
www.asse.org
Occupational Safety and Health Administration  
www.osha.gov
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention  
www.cdc.gov
National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health  
www.niosh.gov
National Council of State Boards of nursing  
www.ncsbn.org

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Thank You!
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