



**Dr Patrick Hillery 1923-2008**

The Faculty is saddened to record the death of one of its Fellows, Dr Patrick J Hillery, former President of Ireland. We join in the national expression of sympathy to the family and son, Dr John Hillery. Among his many achievements, he was a former Minister for Labour and served as Ireland's first European Union Commissioner holding the portfolio of Social Affairs Commissioner. He introduced the E U Directive on Equal Pay. He brought about European improvements for disabled workers and introduced the European Social Fund.

In recognition of his accomplishments he was conferred with Honorary Fellowship of the Faculty of Occupational Medicine in 1979.



Above is a copy of his signed entry on the Faculty's Roll of Fellows. He was also a member of the distinguished group of doctors, the "Eustaceans", which was established in Ireland in 1972, prior to the foundation of the Faculty.

Dr John Malone

## AN EXPANDED ROLE FOR OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH

Dame Carol Black's review of the health of Britain's working age population "Working for a healthier tomorrow" was published in March:-

<http://workingforhealth.gov.uk/documents/working-for-a-healthier-tomorrow-tagged.pdf>

She estimates that the annual economic costs of sickness absence and "worklessness associated with ill-health" are over £100 billion a year - greater than the current annual NHS budget.

Her main recommendations are as follows:-

- Government, healthcare professionals, employers, trades unions and all with an interest in the health of the working age population should adopt a new approach to health and work.
- The existing cross-Government structure should be strengthened to incorporate the relevant functions of those departments whose policies influence the health of the working age population.
- Government should commission a coordinated programme of further research to inform future action with a comprehensive evidence base.



**Professor Dame Carol Black,  
UK National Director for Health and Work**



The Dean, Dr Ken Addley presents Professor George Carruthers, Dean of the Medical School, Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences, University of the United Arab Emirates, with a copy of the Faculty Coat of Arms.

The Dean had been a visiting Professor in the Department of Community Medicine, working with the head of department, Professor Ching Aw.

It had been agreed that the Faculty would consider how best to collaborate with colleagues in the UAE in regard to training, research and other areas of mutual interest in the field of occupational medicine. A Memorandum of Understanding will be considered by both parties.

### VIDEOCONFERENCE

A videoconference between UAE University Faculty of Medicine & Health Sciences [Dept of Community Medicine] and the Faculty of Occupational Medicine of the Royal College of Physicians of Ireland was held on Wednesday 27 February 2008

The Dean of Faculty of Medicine & Health Sciences, UAEU, Professor George Carruthers welcomed all participants and expressed his support for the videoconference and other links with our Faculty.

The event from the UAE side was chaired by the Dean, Dr Ken Addley and Dr Martin Hogan

chaired from Dublin. The meeting discussed reviews of recent papers which were presented by both groups of participants. OH developments in the Gulf were outlined by Dr. John Schneider and Dr. Mark Newson-Smith and Dr Addley gave an update on his visit to UAE. The meeting was very well attended and it was agreed to hold another event in November.



### Dr Peter Noone and Dr Ian Eustace at the Annual Jack Eustace Lecture

The Annual Jack Eustace Lecture was delivered by Dr Noone on the 3<sup>rd</sup> April, with the title "THOR and the Iceberg of Occupational Disease". This was an extremely well attended event in 6 Kildare Street with a multidisciplinary audience which included doctors, nurses, toxicologists and occupational hygienists.

### ISOM Spring Weekend Naas, Co Kildare 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> April 2008



Dr Ken Addley, Dean of the Faculty, Dr Dermot Halpin, President ISOM, Dr Jacqui McCarthy, President-elect ISOM, and Dr Tony McGread, Chairman Northern Ireland SOM.

## Book Review

"The Trouble with Medical Journals" by Richard Smith, editor of the BMJ for many years, was published by the Royal Society of Medicine in 2006 and reprinted in 2007.

In a carefully researched manner, but lightly written, without technical jargon, he explores the usefulness and uselessness of journals. He uses lots of examples to highlight the issues he wishes to raise.

The book contains many serious matters that are relevant to exam candidates writing theses (hoping to publish later), and equally relevant to examiners and trainers. Chapters 6 and 7 cover, in simple terms, randomised trials, risk adjustment, placebo effect, regression to mean, causation/statistical association. Chapters 8-12 deal with research misconduct, fraudulent reporting, and redundant publication of rehashed material. He highlights the obvious ethical issues involved here, but also the damaging effects of such practices on subsequent meta analysis ... meta analysis being the basis for evidence-based medicine.

He also goes into the role of the pharmaceutical companies and matters of lesser interest to the Faculty (but fascinating to read) concerning the huge financial rewards of some of the publishing companies.

All of this leads to the conclusion that the book should be a compulsory read for examiners, trainers and probably exam candidates (although it in no way attempts to cover pure statistics or epidemiology). The book may become a standard textbook in due course, and a copy for the college or Faculty library would not go astray.



**Dr Robert Ryan, Dr Tom O'Connell and Vice-Dean, Dr Paul Guéret at the Spring Meeting on 4<sup>th</sup> April**

**Smiley Lecture on Friday 21<sup>st</sup> November - a special date for your diary**



**Professor Cary Cooper CBE**

The Faculty is pleased to announce that Professor Cooper will deliver the 21st Annual James Smiley Lecture on the 21st November 2008. Professor Cooper is currently professor of Organisational Psychology and Health at the Lancaster University Management School. He is also a Visiting Professor at Heriot-Watt University (Edinburgh), and at the universities of Sheffield, Exeter and Liverpool. He holds honorary doctorates from Heriot-Watt, Wolverhampton, Aston and Middlesex universities. Many distinctions and honours have been bestowed on him over the years and he has published widely on stress and organisational psychology.

He has been invited to give major addresses at international conferences and universities abroad (e.g., International Monetary Fund, Hong Kong Occupational Safety & Health Commission, Free University of Berlin, University of Bergen, University of Stockholm, University of Tilberg, University of Braga, University of Amsterdam, Queens University (Canada), University of Virginia, etc.), and to government and international bodies all over the world: Japan, Norway, Denmark, Germany, Finland, US, Ireland, Russia, Sweden, Portugal, Australia, Hong Kong, etc. He has also appeared regularly on British radio and TV, and co-wrote and presented a five-part documentary series on workplace stress for Thames TV entitled "How to Survive the 9 to 5", which was shown on Channel 4 TV.

We all look forward to his lecture – with the Annual Dinner taking place that evening, the 21<sup>st</sup> November is a date to be particularly noted.

### **Abstracts January 2008**

In a study of 24486 women and men of the French working population, psychosocial work factors were found to be strong risk factors for health outcomes based on three health indicators [self-reported health, long sickness absence (>8 days of absence) and work injury]. Psychosocial work exposures included psychological demands, decision latitude, social support, workplace bullying and violence from the public. Response rate was 96.5% to a self-administered questionnaire with men and women being analysed separately. The results were unchanged after adjustment for other occupational risk factors. High demands were also found to be associated with work injury.

*Isabelle Niedhammer et al. Occupational Medicine 2008 58(1): 15-24.*

In a retrospective study of 1940 pre-employment assessments (PEA) for non-hazardous occupations (occupations for which no medical supervision is required by law), filling out an occupational health questionnaire (OHQ) reviewed by an occupational physician (OP) achieved the same restriction rate compared with those examined by an OP or examined by a general practitioner (GP) whose medical records were subsequently evaluated by an OP.

The study recommends use of the OHQ with review by the OP as the most cost-effective means of carrying out the PEA in non-hazardous occupations.

*Shlomo Moshe, Michal Shilo et al. Occupational Medicine 2008 58(1):46-51*

A study of self-reported health complaints among Dutch male workers in manufacturing reported perceived physical job demands matched with self-reported musculoskeletal complaints, whereas perceived mental job demands were unrelated to specific complaints. Analysis of 867 self-completed Basic Occupational Health Questionnaires using logistic regression analysis with health complaints as the outcome variable showed high prevalence of health complaints. Standing work predicted pain in the legs and thoracic as well as low back pain, while sedentary work predicted low back pain. Heavy lifting predicted low back pain and pain in the extremities. Regular bending predicted low back pain and pain in the legs. Repetitive movements predicted pain in the arms and thoracic as well as low back pain. Mental workload was associated with fatigue and chest pain. Working under time pressure and working behind schedule were not related to self-reported health complaints.

*Corne A. Roelen , K. Jeep Schreuder et al.  
Occupational Medicine 2008 58(1):58-63*

### **Low organisational justice and heavy drinking: a prospective cohort study**

Data from a prospective occupational cohort study of Finnish public sector local government employees were used. Non-drinkers were excluded. Procedural, interactional and total organisational justice, heavy drinking ( $\geq 210$  g of absolute alcohol per week) and other psychosocial factors were determined by means of questionnaire in 2000–2001 (phase 1) and 2004 (phase 2). Multilevel logistic regression analyses taking into account the hierarchical structure of the data were conducted and adjustments were made for sex, age, socio-economic status, marital status, baseline heavy drinking, psychological distress and other psychosocial risk factors such as job strain and effort/reward imbalance.

After adjustments, participants who reported low procedural justice at phase 1 were approximately 1.2 times more likely to be heavy drinkers at phase 2 compared with their counterparts reporting high justice. Low perceived justice in interpersonal treatment and low perceived total organisational justice were associated with increased prevalence of heavy drinking only in the model adjusted for sociodemographics.

*Anne Kouvonen et al. Occupational and Environmental Medicine 2008;65:44-50*

### **Air pollution and risk of urinary bladder cancer in a case-control study in Spain**

Air pollution has been associated with an increased risk for lung cancer. This study examined whether long-term air pollution is associated with bladder cancer risk.

Information from a case-control study in Spain that included 1219 incident cases and 1271 hospital controls was used. Information on residential history including several indicators of exposure to air pollution and other potential risk factors was collected in a face-to-face computerised personal interview. Odds ratios (OR) and 95% confidence intervals (95% CI) were adjusted for age, gender, region, smoking, occupation, water contaminants and diet.

Living more than 40 years in a city with a population of more than 100 000 was associated with an increased risk for bladder cancer overall (OR 1.30, 95% CI 1.04 to 1.63). Emissions of polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons and diesel from industries near the residence, as evaluated by experts, were associated with an increased risk (OR 1.29, 95% CI 0.85 to 1.98), while lower or no excess risks were observed for other pollution-related variables. Odds ratios among never smokers tended to be higher than among smokers.

The conclusions of the study were that the small to moderate positive associations found for several indices of air pollution and bladder cancer, while suggestive of excess risk, require further evaluation in other settings.

*Gemma Castaño-Vinyals et al. Occupational and Environmental Medicine 2008;65:56-60*

## **Abstracts February 2008**

### **Training and other predictors of personal protective equipment use in Australian grain farmers using pesticides**

This study, a cross-sectional survey of 1102 farmers, investigated patterns of use of personal protective equipment (PPE) to reduce pesticide exposure in a sample of Australian

farmers and also to assess the influence of possible predictive factors.

Participants answered questions about frequency of pesticide use and PPE items they usually used when doing two different pesticide-related tasks, mixing and application, of each of four classes of pesticides. They also answered questions about personal characteristics, farm characteristics, farming activities, career and health.

Nearly all surveyed farmers had ever used pesticides, and over 87% had used Herbicides or Animal Health Products in the previous 12 months. Non-use of PPE was frequently reported, with up to 10–40% of farmers routinely using no PPE at all when using pesticides. Across all pesticide classes, PPE use was higher for pesticide mixing than for application. In multivariate analyses PPE use appeared to be most strongly associated with younger age and farm chemical training.

The conclusions were that PPE use across all pesticide classes was poor, indicating the possibility of clinically significant pesticide exposure in many farmers. Given that PPE use was found to be associated with farm chemical training, the authors suggest that training is likely to be an important intervention for reducing farmers' pesticide exposure. Poor uptake of farm chemical training by farmers and the aging farming workforce are causes for concern in the light of these findings.

*E MacFarlane et al. Occupational and Environmental Medicine 2008;65:141-146*

### **Abstracts March 2008**

A retrospective study utilising univariate logistic regression analysis was used to develop a screening tool for identifying those most at risk

of job loss. Current evidence shows incapacity benefit claimants in the UK (those off sick >26 weeks) are at greatest risk of long-term job loss. The tool developed for the Job Retention and Rehabilitation Pilot of the UK Department for Work and Pensions utilises questions covering self-assessment of ability to return to work after current sick leave, of ability to do current job in 6 months' time, sick leave in past year, current age and whether awaiting a consultation or treatment.

*Jane Wilford, Alex D. McMahon et al.  
Occupational Medicine 2008;58(2):99-106*

### **Shift work, confounding and death from ischaemic heart disease**

A case-referent study nested within an industrial cohort was used to investigate the relation between shift work and death from ischaemic heart disease (IHD) and evidence for confounding by social class and healthy shift worker effects.

Cases (n = 635) were cohort members who died of ischaemic heart disease (ICD 410–414) during 1950–98 aged 75 or under. Referents were matched on age and year of starting work at the site and were alive at time of case's death. Shift work status was determined from historical personnel records and pre-employment weight, height, blood pressure and smoking from medical records. Social class at first employment was inferred from job titles. To overcome potential bias due to a healthy shift worker hire effect, odds ratios were calculated from survivors 10 years after hire. To control for any healthy shift worker survivor effect, they were adjusted for duration of employment and time since termination of employment. Conditional logistic regression analysis was used to estimate ORs.

55% of subjects had worked as shift workers. Shift workers were more likely than day workers to belong to social class IV or V. The OR for shift workers compared with day workers, after adjustment for pre-employment risk factors, duration of employment and restricted to those who survived 10 years after hire was 1.11 (90% CI 0.90 to 1.37). This reduced to 1.04 (90% CI 0.83 to 1.30) after inclusion of social class. No dose-response relation was found.

No excess risk of death from IHD for shift workers was found. The potential for confounding by social class in this relatively homogeneous cohort underlines the need to consider such confounding in more heterogeneous populations.

*G Yadegarfar, R McNamee. Occupational and Environmental Medicine 2008;65:158-163*

A pan-European survey of prevalence violence in nursing reported that factors improving team-working were associated with a decrease in violence against nurses. 39 894 nurses responded to a baseline questionnaire (51% response rate). After adjustment for age, gender and other risk factors, quality of teamwork appeared to be a major factor with odds ratio (OR) 1.35 (1.24–1.48) for medium quality and 1.52 (1.33–1.74) for low quality. Uncertainty regarding patients' treatments was linked with violence, with a clear gradient (OR 1.59, 1.47–1.72 for medium uncertainty and 2.13, 1.88–2.41 for high uncertainty). Working only night shift was at high risk (OR 2.17, 1.76–2.67). High levels of time pressure and physical load were associated with violence OR 1.45 (1.24–1.69) and 1.84 (1.66–2.04), respectively. High and medium frequency of violence was associated with higher levels of burnout, intent to leave nursing and intent to change institution. A 1-year follow-up assessment

indicated stability in the relationships between outcomes.

*Madeleine Estryng-Behar, Beatrice van der Heijden. Occupational Medicine 2008 58(2):107-114*

A study of 2334 Finish IT professionals to assess the prevalence of sleep debt, insomnia and long working hours and to analyse which specific work-related factors are associated with shortened sleep reported long working hours were common ( $\geq 50$  hours/week) but sleep debt and insomnia were not. Work-related factors were associated with insufficient sleep. Just 37% reported sleep debt of at least 1 h and 6% of at least 2 h, while 16% reported insomnia. The most important factors associated with both sleep debt and insomnia were work-related demands requiring long hours, mental stamina and problem solving and positive perceptions of work, such as job control and importance of the respondents' own work in their life.

*Marketta Kivistö, Mikko Härmä et al. Occupational Medicine 2008 58(2):138-140*

### **Dates for your diary**

Deadline for fellowship nominations (Malaysia)  
31st December 2008 (for May 2009 conferring)

Examination dates – 19th to 21st May 2008

Faculty's Board meetings in 2008:-  
Wednesday 14th May  
Wednesday 18th June  
Wednesday 17th September  
Wednesday 15th October  
Wednesday 12th November

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Joint FOM/ISOM meeting in Kuala Lumpur  
23rd - 25th May 2008

Autumn Scientific Meeting  
Friday 3<sup>rd</sup> October 2008 (*note change of date*)

AGM and 21st annual Smiley Lecture,  
Admission Ceremony and Annual Dinner  
Friday 21st November 2008

### ISOM meetings

Friday 9th May 2008 at 7.30pm:- Stephen's  
Green Club – "Epilepsy and work" (Dr Ronan  
Walsh). The second speaker is to be  
confirmed.

Contact [drtom.donnely@finance.gov.ie](mailto:drtom.donnely@finance.gov.ie) for  
further information.

Friday 12th September 2008 - Joan Gilvarry (to  
be confirmed)

Friday 13th June 2008 at 7.30pm:- Hermitage  
Clinic (opposite Liffey Valley SC) - "Cognitive  
Behavioural Therapy" (Alan Dovey,  
psychologist and Sharon Wilday, psychologist).  
Contact [drtom.donnely@finance.gov.ie](mailto:drtom.donnely@finance.gov.ie) for  
further information.

Friday 17th October 2008 at 7.30pm:- Annual  
Black Tie Dinner at The Radisson SAS Royal  
Hotel (behind Dublin Castle).

Thursday 20th November 2008:- ISOM AGM –  
Stephen's Green Club. Speaker to be  
confirmed.

### Northern Ireland SOM dates

Friday 30<sup>th</sup> May 2-5pm in Lincoln Building,  
Great Victoria Street, Belfast:- Spring Meeting  
("Hearing in Practice – what's new?") followed  
by the annual dinner (at Deane's Restaurant).

Wednesday 24<sup>th</sup> September 2-5pm in Lincoln  
Building, Great Victoria Street, Belfast:- AGM  
("Driving for a living – a clinical update")

Wednesday 26<sup>th</sup> November – workplace visit to  
Belfast Port Authority.

**Since January 2007, the newsletter has been  
produced in electronic format only.**

**If you have not already submitted your  
current e-mail address to the Faculty, kindly  
do so by e-mailing [fom@rcpi.ie](mailto:fom@rcpi.ie)**

**Faculty of Occupational Medicine  
Royal College of Physicians of Ireland  
Frederick House  
19 South Frederick Street  
Dublin 2**

#### Editorial Team

**Dr John McCaughan (Editor)  
Dr Muiris Houston  
Dr Tom O'Connell  
Dr Oghenovo Oghuvbu  
Dr Alex Reid  
Dr Delia Skan  
Dr Susan Power – SpR Representative**

**E-mail: [fom@rcpi.ie](mailto:fom@rcpi.ie)**