



Workplace Health Without Borders

March 1, 2018

Dear Friends, Colleagues and Interested Occupational Medicine Practitioners,

By way of introduction, my name is Dr Clare Wood and I am an occupational physician from Australia, working in Brisbane, Queensland. I was lucky enough to be invited onto the board of Workplace Health Without Borders (International) last year, and am delighted to be working with such a wonderful and important non-profit organisation.

WHWB (International) was originally the brainchild of a group of occupational hygienists who recognised that their skills were needed in parts of the world where the specialist training that they had was not available. The mission is to have a world where people do not get sick because of their work. This is an ambitious target, and one that cannot be solved with hygienists alone.

The board of WHWB (international) believe that health care providers provide an excellent interface to identify occupational illnesses and work-related death occurring as a result of exposure to health hazards. In many cases, when the worker is assessed and a diagnosis is made, it is too late to prevent the progression of the illness which may result in death. The interface between the worker and the retired worker with the health care provider, provides a wonderful opportunity to prevent this occurring for other workers. So, in setting up this sub-group we want to ask the question “what occupational diseases are you seeing that are not being adequately addressed and how systemic is the problem?”

Areas where we feel that WHWB (international) can work closely with health care providers is to provide an integrated approach to “build in” the prevention of occupational disease. Although it is early days, and goals around this process still need to be developed in collaboration with health care providers, a questionnaire can be formulated specifically for health care providers in developing economies. Perhaps we can identify with the health care providers contacts who are at this interface. The questionnaire can seek to identify what occupational diseases are occurring, the specific workplace location, and what hazards are causing the problem. Hazard identification is an important first step of health risk assessment, and risk management towards prevention. This will also help WHWB (International) target areas where assistance may be required and then offer support.

To help build an integrated approach we are looking to develop a subgroup within the organisation focused more on the clinical aspects of occupational health and that is why I am writing today.

This subgroup will include all interested individuals working in a clinical field, or with a clinical qualification within occupational health – so doctors, nurses, allied health professionals and others. The aim is to use our collective expertise, training and education skills, in combination with our extensive networks to improve the availability of advanced occupational medicine to areas of the world where it

Imagine a world where workers do not get sick because of their work

may not be available at present. This may include designing or delivering training programs, mentoring, research support, or hands on delivery of services. The way that WHWB (International) works is that individual projects are designed and then funding for that project is sought through industry connections, grants or other means. Projects may be purely clinical, or in combination with hygienists.

We can also use our networks to identify where the training already provided by WHWB (International) and its expert hygienists may be useful, to support the work that is already being done.

The aims of the subgroup are:

- to identify areas where hygiene training may be useful, able to be supported/hosted/funded - as an adjunct to the work already being done by WHWB (International)
- to identify need for other types of training - medical, nursing etc. that could be run concurrently with or independently of the hygiene training
- to design new or find appropriate existing training models for this delivery
- to identify potential projects in areas of the world where resources are not available, which may be more clinically focused, whilst still maintaining our commitment to prevention of occupational disease
- to create a network of practitioners worldwide to provide expertise, support and access to the world's at-risk workforce

If you are interested in being part of this group then please let me know your contact details (email and phone), your background and current role and where in the world you have connections in the world of occupational health. My email address is: drclarewood@gmail.com

All interested practitioners will need to be members of WHWB in order to be part of this subgroup. You can find information about joining at <http://www.whwb.org/join-whwb/>

Please feel free to forward this invitation to any interested colleagues and friends.

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