

COHNA  ACIIST

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INFORMATION BOOKLET

*Leaders Advancing Health and Safety for the Wellbeing
of Canadian Workplaces*

ENGLISH VERSION

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Occupational Health Nurse Provincial Groups

Association of Occupational Health Nurse of Newfoundland Labrador*
www.arnnl.ca/special-interest-groups

Occupational Health Nurses Association of Nova Scotia*
www.ohnans.com

New Brunswick Occupational Health Nurses Group*
www.nbohng-riistnb.ca

Ontario Occupational Health Nurses Association Inc.
www.oohna.on.ca

Occupational Health Nurses Interest Group (Ontario)
www.ohnig.ca

Manitoba Occupational Health Nurses Interest Group*
www.mohnig.ca

Saskatchewan Occupational Health Nurses Professional Practice Group*

Alberta Occupational Health Nurses' Association*
www.aohna.org

Occupational Nurses' Specialty Association of British Columbia*

* Indicates COHNA-ACIIST members

Occupational Health Nurse – Working Definition

An Occupational Health Nurse is a Registered Nurse practicing in the specialty of Occupational Health, Safety, Environment and Wellness to deliver integrated occupational health, safety, environmental and wellness services to individual workers and worker populations. Occupational Health Nursing encompasses the promotion, maintenance and restoration of health and the prevention of illness and injury.

Occupational Health Nurse – Designations

OHN – Registered Nurse working within the OHN scope of practice.

COHN – Registered Nurse who has successfully completed a diploma/certificate in Occupational Health Nursing.

COHN(C) – A Registered Nurse who has successfully passed the Canadian Nurses' Association specialty exam in Occupational Health.

Occupational Health Nurse Scope of Practice

The Occupational Health Nurse ...

- Assesses needs related to occupational health, safety, environment and wellness (considering relevant legislation, hazards, personnel, and community resources).
- Plan, evaluate, assess, develops and directs the occupational health service activities and programs.
- Promotes early identification and coordinates assessment and referral for complex medical conditions including Mental Health Issues.
- Communicates and collaborates with others on health, safety, environment and wellness issues and related policy development with professional colleagues, labor and management representatives and community agencies.
- Resolves conflicts and issues related to confidential information.
- Develops and maintains complete and accurate health records on individual employees including health history, work history, results of health examinations, medical and lab reports, ongoing health surveillance, baseline measurements, immunizations, and recommendations/referrals.
- Maintains employee health information in a secure and confidential manner. These maybe print or electronic records.
- Establishes and maintains information related to health & safety programs such as workplace inspections, accident reports and investigations, harmful substances used worker exposure, area monitoring, emergency drills, health and safety training.
- Prepares statistical and or/narrative reports.

Management of Occupational Health Services

The Occupational Health Nurse ...

- Collaborates and consults with company departments to ensure effective allocation/distribution of Occupational Health, Safety and Wellness programs and support services.
- Develops, evaluates and revises occupational health policies and procedures relevant to the workplace (for example nursing protocols, medical directives, environmental surveillance, return to work policy etc.)

- Prepares timely reports in cooperation with workers, supervisors, and management to meet provincial and federal legislative requirements (e.g. Workers Compensation Boards, Departments of Labour, Environment, and/or Health.)
- Prepares budgets for the Occupational Health, Safety, Environment and Wellness services.
- Develops position descriptions and a performance appraisal system for Occupational Health staff.
- Assesses and recommends suitable levels of staffing and physical space for health service activities and obtains and maintains basic and specialized equipment required.
- Arranges for Occupational Health staff training, specific to the needs of the individual and the employer.
- Networks with professional colleagues and associations including nursing, medical, Employee Assistance Programs, health, emergency measures and fire prevention/inspection services.
- Utilizes audit information for strategic planning for Occupational Health, Safety, Environment and Wellness services.

Health Assessment/Medical Management/Health Surveillance

The Occupational Health Nurse ...

- Assesses health of workers guided by legal and professional standards.
- Identifies, arranges and conducts specific tests which measure fitness-for-work applicable to the workers' job description. Applies fitness-for-work standards (related to the demands of the job) during employee health assessment (e.g. pre-placement, pre-transfer, periodic, special, post illness or injury, termination.)
- Explains findings of assessment to worker (e.g. implications related to job requirements.)
- Informs, counsels and refers workers with atypical results.
- Recommends specific job modifications within functional limitations.
- Recommends appropriate personal protective equipment if indicated.
- Identifies employee groups potentially at risk, based on exposures specific to the workplace.
- Collaborates with management, other health professionals and workers in the development of programs related to worker exposure.

- Ensures health monitoring procedures conform to pertinent legislation, e.g. Occupational Health, Safety, Environmental and Wellness, Human Rights, etc.
- Implements health surveillance programs for workers at risk.
- Develop, assess implement, evaluate and revise programs focusing on special needs such as hearing conservation, sight conservation, respiratory.
- Acts in an advisory capacity to supervisors and the Joint Occupational Health & Safety Committee.

Assessment and Care of Injury and Illness

The Occupational Health Nurse ...

- Utilizes history taking and physical assessment skills to evaluate ill or injured workers.
- Plans and implements nursing interventions to minimize effects of injury, illness or disability.
- Interprets signs and symptoms in relation to possible workplace exposure such as cumulative trauma disorder, hearing loss, repetitive strain, hypothermia, hyperthermia, radiation sickness.
- Refers workers to appropriate treatment source, utilizing available community facilities for treatment, rehabilitation and supportive care.
- Follows up on referrals to confirm resolution of problems and/or reinforce recommended treatment.
- Identifies the causes of and/or trends in occupational accidents and injuries and makes recommendations as necessary.
- Identifies needs of employees with chronic or life-threatening conditions such as cancer, hypertension, arthritis, asthma, diabetes, hypercholesterolemia, Hepatitis C and plans early intervention to assist workers in achieving optimum level of functioning.
- Assists in arranging modified work in collaboration with the worker, management, physician, insurance carriers, and other key stakeholders consistent with current legislation and employment agreements.
- Establishes trust and credibility.

Health and Safety Education/Promotion

The Occupational Health Nurse ...

- Determines priority issues through senior management, managers and supervisors, Occupational Health Safety and Wellness (OHS&W) personnel, workers and unions.
- Collects data to identify risk for specific diseases/injuries (e.g. hypertension, obstructive lung disease, back injury, repetitive motion injuries, etc.) and develops and implements programs based on data and the needs of the organization.
- Sets objectives based on program goals, for example increasing awareness, increasing knowledge, changing attitudes, changing behavior, reducing risk, and reducing morbidity/mortality. Analyzes data to determine whether the program is achieving its objectives. Evaluates current programs of adult education in preventative education, on topics pertinent to the individual work force.
- Utilizes community resources (professional literature, education films, existing programs, specialists, etc.)
- Provides training to workers on a variety of topics (first aid training, Waste Hazardous Materials Information Systems, etc.)

Employee Assistance/Counselling

The Occupational Health Nurse ...

- Develops, implements, monitors and evaluates the Employee Assistance programs.
- Provides assessment, referrals and short-term counseling, utilizing appropriate techniques when working with workers or their families.
- Refers workers requiring therapeutic counseling to appropriate resources, providing follow-up support as necessary.
- Plans and coordinates critical incident stress education and management for individuals or groups of employees.

Record Keeping/ Statistics

The Occupational Health Nurse ...

- Establishes and maintains confidential health records.
- Applies principles of epidemiology to the workplace (e.g. cause/effect relationship, collection of data, analysis of results, etc.)
- Collects and analyzes data related to worker illness and injury for research purposes.
- Utilizes research findings to support OHS&W proposals to management.
- Prepares statistical reports related to OHS&W programs to management.

Environmental Surveillance & Control

The Occupational Health Nurse ...

- Participates in walk-through surveys to identify environmental hazards.
- Recognizes potential environmental health hazards including:
 - Physical, for example noise, temperature, radiation;
 - Toxicological, for example, chemicals;
 - Biological, for example, bacteria, fungi, insects, plants;
 - Biomechanical/Ergonomic for example person/machine interface;
 - Physical demand analysis, job demand analysis, risk assessment.
- Reviews environmental surveillance reports in relation to regulated permissible exposure levels.
- Collaborates in the development of monitoring protocols which indicate type of tests (including hazard specific tests) frequency of measurements, nature of reports, follow-up and referral.
- Applies principles of industrial hygiene and makes recommendations for the control of environmental hazards (for example substitution, of chemicals, engineering controls, administrative controls, personal protective equipment.
- Applies principles of loss control, accident investigation and safety programming.

- Collaborates with appropriate departments, agencies and/or consultants regarding identified hazards utilizing the services of the Workers Compensation Board, Department of Labor and Environment, health and safety organizations.
- Collaborates with key personnel to develop and an emergency response plan.

Disability Case Management

The Occupational Health Nurse ...

- Collaborates with the worker, physicians, allied health care providers and insurance carriers (for example Workers' Compensation Board and Health Service Providers) to provide appropriate treatment for ill or injured workers.
- Develops and implements effective rehabilitative measures to facilitate the early and safe return to work of sick or injuries workers.
- Arranges workplace accommodation vocational rehabilitation for individual workers in the form of modified work.

Occupational Health and Safety Legislation

The Occupational Health Nurse ...

- Interprets and explains occupational health and safety legislation to management and joint workplace Health & Safety Committees.
- Assists the employer to meet the requirements of occupational health, safety, environmental, and wellness legislation (Legislation may be federal, provincial or municipal).

Benefit Administration

The Occupational Health Nurse ...

- Partners with insurance carriers, Workers' Compensation, Canada Pension Plan, and others to assist the employee to return to optimal health.
- Coordinates the development of individualized return to work plans based on principles of disability case management.
- Facilitates the provision of benefits for eligible employees.

Cost Benefits Studies

The Occupational Health Nurse ...

- Investigates the cost of proposed Occupational Health, Safety and & Wellness (OHS&W) programs and services and presents options to the employer.
- Builds evaluation criteria into proposed OHS&W programs.
- Estimates cost recovery periods.

Research

Occupational Health Nurses ...

- Use evidence-based data to develop the plan of care and interventions.
- Participate in research activities in the field of occupational health, safety and wellness.
- Are aware of the purpose of research, ethics in research, and research development.
- Understand the identification of the problem, significance of the study, literature review, hypothesis, methodology, problem statement, and evaluate research.

Research is necessary to expand the knowledge for occupational health, safety, wellness and environmental health nursing practice.

Benefits to Employers

In business, every dollar and every minute counts and Occupational Health Nurses are a valuable asset to achieve savings. The Occupational Health Nurse is a key member of the Management team to:

- Reduce the company's expenses and increase profits by managing absences related to injury, illness and disability thus reducing insurance premiums such as Workers' Compensation and Short/Long Term Disability.
- Improve employee productivity and reduce downtime.
- By promoting physical and social well-being, preventing disease, injury and disability, and by assisting in the rehabilitation of ill and injured workers, the Occupational Health Nurse can contribute to a higher level of wellness among the employee population and thus increase productivity. Companies will see improved employee performance through Occupational Health, Safety, Environmental and Wellness activities.

- Provide customized, effective health and safety programs.
- Save hours of management time identifying health and safety concerns and understanding government regulations. An Occupational Health Nurse can tailor programs to workplace requirements.
- Align occupational health, safety, environmental and wellness goals with corporate goals and objectives, using knowledge of corporate philosophy, policies and procedures.
- Enhance the company profile as a responsible employer and improve employee morale.
- Make the workplace a better place by acting as a liaison between management and employees to demonstrate the company's interest in employee health and well-being.

Why Employ an Occupational Health Nurse?

Join other successful companies, whose Occupational Health Nurses are highly skilled and are cost-effective additions to the team.

In Canada:

- Occupational Health Nurses (OHNs) are Registered Nurses holding a diploma or degree in nursing and a variety or additional qualifications and experience.
- OHNs may also have a certificate/diploma in Occupational Health Nursing from a community college.
- OHNs may also have a certificate/diploma in Occupational Health Nursing from a University.
- OHNs may also be certified in Occupational Health Nursing.
- Certification indicates the nurse has met specific eligibility requirements, passed a written exam and has met a national standard of competency in Occupational Health. In Canada, expertise unique to this specialty is recognized with the initials COHN(C), granted by the Canadian Nurses Association. The initials COHN or COHN(S) recognize US certification. These are marks of distinction for Occupational Health Nursing excellence.
- OHNs must be licensed to practice nursing in their respective provinces.
- OHNs are guided by a Scope of Occupational Health Nursing Practice and by various Acts within each province.
- OHNs are held accountable for their nursing practice by their provincial licensing association.

COHNA-ACIIST Membership

The Canadian Occupational Health Nurses Association /Association Canadienne des infirmières et infirmiers en sante due travail is a professional association that:

- Promotes national standards for Occupational Health Nursing practice.
- Advances the profession by providing a national forum for the exchange of ideas and concerns of Occupational Health Nursing.
- Enhances the profile of Occupational Health Nurses at the provincial/ territorial/ national and international levels.
- Improves health, safety, environmental and wellness of workers by speaking with a national voice to influence health and safety regulations and legislation.
- Contributes to the health of the community by providing quality health services to workers.
- Encourages continuing education and ensures that the certification process meets COHNA-ACIIST standards.

International Occupational Health Nursing Associations

American Association of Occupational Health Nurses

www.aaohn.org

American Board for Occupational Health Nurses

www.abohn.org

Association of Occupational Health Nurse Practitioners (UK)

www.aohnp.co.uk

New Zealand Occupational Health Nurses Association

www.nzohna.org.nz

Canadian Nursing Associations

Canadian Nurses Association

www.cna-aiic.ca

Canadian Occupational Health Nurses Association Inc.

/Association Canadienne des infirmières et infirmiers en sante du travail Inc.

www.cohna-aciist.ca

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Salazar, M.K., (2014), Core Curriculum for Occupational & Environmental Health Nursing, W.B. Saunders Company, Toronto.

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Cathy Dormody RN, BN, COHN(C)
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 Linda Maddison, RN, BScN, COHN(C)
 Mary Morris, RN, BN, COHN(C), COHN, CRSP, CHRP
 Shawna Nelson, RN, BScN, COHN(C), COHN, CDMP, LNC, ESS, BCom
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