
Collaborating Centre Connection - September 2011

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Farewell and Reflections; Lessons Learned from Collaboration in Occupational Health

By Claudina Nogueira



Dear All,

Greetings from Johannesburg, South Africa. I am writing to let you know that I resigned from the National Institute for Occupational Health (NIOH) in Johannesburg, South Africa on 31 August 2011. I was with the organization for 21 years, where I worked in different capacities and developed professionally. On September 1st, I joined the multinational mining company Anglo American, and I am pleased to report that my career path

continues to be in occupational health and safety.

All my collaborative contacts and friendships in occupational health and safety have been forged because of my long-time employment at the NIOH, and I am very appreciative of and grateful for all that we have accomplished together. In particular, in the last 10 years, my focus has really been on the active involvement in regional and international collaboration programmes in occupational health.

The two main regional programmes have been the Fogarty International Center / University of Michigan Programme for International Training and Research in

Environmental and Occupational Health for Southern Africa; and the Work and Health in Southern Africa (WAHSA) Programme, funded by Sida (Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency). The programmes were complimentary as the Fogarty programme had an academic focus and developed centres of excellence in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Region; while WAHSA concentrated on action-driven intervention projects in different workplaces. Both programmes aimed to establish and develop capacity for occupational and environmental health in the SADC Region.

A more comprehensive involvement with international collaboration in occupational health has been my work with the WHO Collaborating Centres (CCs) in Occupational Health (OH), through the global network plans: 2006–2010 (as Manager of *Activity Area 6: Communication and Networking*); and 2009–2012 (as Manager of *GPA Objective 1: To devise and implement policy instruments on workers' health*). Through these long-term collaborations I have learnt a great deal; have developed professionally; have been mentored by selfless and expert champions in occupational health; and have enjoyed getting to know and working with many experts in the varied fields that constitute occupational health. This collaborative work has also provided invaluable opportunities to liaise closely with stalwart occupational health organisations with international reputations such as NIOSH (USA), FIOH (Finland), HSL (UK), NIWL and NIPH (Sweden), and ICOH, amongst others. I am indebted to all the GPA managers and to the GPA Objective 1 initiative leaders especially, as well as the network coordinators and anchors - solid friendships have developed from our work foundations - and I hope that I can continue to be involved in global collaboration and liaison in the occupational health and safety field, going forward.

I am most grateful to the occupational health mentors who have shaped and influenced my professional development through many years, and who continue to be an inspiration to me; in particular, Halina Röllin, David Rees, Mary Ross, Jill Murray, Tom Robins, Marilyn Fingerhut and Gerry Eijkemans - my heartfelt thanks and appreciation!

My liaison and collaborative work in occupational health have taught me many lessons: Oslo is the most expensive city, more so than Geneva... a return train trip from Geneva to Grindelwald in the Swiss Alps takes six hours, and is worth every minute... Stresa on Lago Maggiore in Italy is the place to go for a gastronomic feast of note... the Perito Moreno Glacier in El Calafate, Patagonia is the most spectacular natural phenomenon... the tango dancers in Buenos Aires are quite simply in a class of their own... the most spectacular bird's eye views of Zanzibar, Tanzania are only possible when one's flight is cancelled without warning, and one boards a chartered 10-seater flight, with much trepidation!

On a more serious note, collaboration is a multi-lane highway which requires much commitment, energy, time and two-way engagement, to be successful. Adequate infrastructure (physical and human resources) is imperative to make the best use of funds. It is important to note that political commitment is required from regional leadership for collaborative, capacity-building programmes to be successful and sustainable. It is difficult to coordinate and implement projects in the absence of established national institutes or agencies with defined policies and responsibility for the project topics. Intervention projects, in particular, are costly and require scarce hard skills - support services are over-stretched in most agencies and additional project loads are problematic.

Notwithstanding the numerous and ongoing challenges, international cooperation programmes have contributed significantly to the improvement of occupational health and safety in the developing world. The collaboration initiatives that I have had the good fortune to be involved with are good examples of how partnering can assist regions, countries and specific sectors to better protect the health and safety of workers. In particular, the partner and contributing institutions in the WHO CC Network in OH continue to work together in a common Global Network Plan to develop electronic resource libraries, practical tools, guidance, and the ever-increasing capacity needed by countries to address the challenges of workers' health.

As I take leave of my direct involvement with the WHO, and abdicate my responsibilities as Manager of GPA Objective 1, I take the opportunity of wishing you all much success in the work of the Global Network Plan, in particular as you prepare to close down the current plan and work towards the launch of the new plan in March 2012, in Mexico, for the continued implementation of the global agenda for occupational health to be possible. May the WHO CC in OH continue to be the model programme for global collaboration!

With sunny regards,
Claudina Nogueira
10 September 2011

**Welcome to Tanusha Singh as GPA 1 Manager,
NIOH, South Africa**



We welcome Tanusha Singh as the new GPA 1 Manager within the Global Network of WHO Collaborating Centres for Occupational Health.

Tanusha graduated from the University of the Witwatersrand, South Africa with a BSc and MSc in microbiology. She recently obtained her PhD and is an associate lecturer at the same university. Her working career began at the National Institute for Occupational Health (NIOH, previously NCOH), South Africa, in 1999 in the Epidemiology & Surveillance section but soon after pursued her passion and joined the Immunology & Microbiology section as a medical scientist. She has been the head of the Immunology & Microbiology section for the past six years. This section is comprised of three specialized units: bioaerosol, occupational allergies and waterborne pathogens. The section's core functions include research, teaching & training and services pertaining to the association between hypersensitivity or disease and workplace exposures caused by immunological mechanisms.

In the early years at NIOH she focused on hazardous biological agents, particularly Legionella contamination in water systems, until she identified the gap in bioaerosol monitoring in South Africa. Through this interest she pioneered the bioaerosol unit within NIOH which has strengthened capacity in the field; the lab is one of its kind in the country providing support to occupational hygienists on risk assessments as well as collaborating on many research projects within South Africa and internationally. The section strives to establish methods for detecting and identifying 'new' agents such as endotoxins and β -glucans as well as molecular techniques for the identification of biological agents. She actively promotes the skills development of young scientists in the discipline, particularly women. Tanusha also serves on a number of technical committees.

She aims to continue driving NIOH's agenda as a WHO Collaborating Centre in occupational health; to broaden its current communication network and continue to serve as a resource of knowledge and skills in occupational health through the work done by NIOH project leaders and external initiatives.

She juggles her time between work and her son's extracurricular activities, not forgetting to squeeze in some time for her hobbies: painting and cake decorating.

On behalf of NIOH, Tanusha wishes her predecessor, Claudina, well with her future career.

First South East Europe Workplace Academy: Healthy Workplaces for Health Workers

Zagreb, Croatia

By Susan Wilburn



The South East Europe (SEE) Network on Workers' Health with leadership from Prof Jadranka Mustajbegovic Head of the Andrija Stampar School of Public Health WHO Collaborating Centre for Occupational Health and Prof. Jovanka Karadzinska Bislimovska of the Institute of Occupational Health in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia launched the first

South East Europe Workplace Academy on health care worker (HCW) occupational health in Zagreb, Croatia at the end of June, 2011. WHO Collaborating Centres for Occupational Health from Finland (FIOH), Institute and Outpatient Clinic for Occupational and Environmental Medicine in Munich Germany, Coronel Institute for Occupational Health, The Netherlands, and the International Healthcare Worker Safety Center in Virginia, USA provided expert trainers for the academy.

Occupational health and safety is a key issue for HCWs. Changes in the delivery of public health care services raise concerns about whether occupational health and safety standards will be adhered to by different providers. Increased violence experienced by HCWs poses a new and growing occupational health problem. With changing occupational health and safety risks, legislation and standards need to be reviewed regularly, especially in relation to trade agreements that set international standards for companies operating in national environments.

The elimination, prevention, diagnosis and treatment of traditional occupational health and safety problems, occupational diseases, injuries and unreasonable workloads require a wider coverage and higher efficiency of Occupational Health Services (OHS). The Basic Occupational Health Services (BOHS) initiative established the ultimate objective: to provide occupational health services for all working people in the world, regardless of the sector of economy, mode of employment, size of the workplace or geographical location.



Establishment of the South East Europe Workplace Academy (SEEWA) addressed these issues and was a result of a long term development of training activities in the Region. Participants at the academy gathered from Austria, Bosnia and

Herzegovina, Croatia, Montenegro, the former Yugoslave Republic of Macedonia, Serbia, Turkey as well as Finland, the Netherlands and Switzerland. A reception was hosted by the Mayor of Zagreb.

Topics and workshops included:

- Basic Occupational Health Services (BOHS) orientation, planning, surveillance and assessment
- Joint WHO-ILO Joint Policy Guidelines for Improving Health Worker Access to HIV and TB prevention, treatment, care and support
http://www.who.int/occupational_health/publications/hiv_tb_guidelines/en/index.html
- WHO-ILO Framework for National Occupational Health Programmes for Health Workers
- WHO Protecting health workers -- preventing needlestick injuries training of trainers using the WHO tool kit
(http://www.who.int/occupational_health/activities/pnitoolkit/en/index.html) together with a workshop on the Evaluation and selection of safer sharps devices to assist in the implementation of the EU Framework Directive on Sharps Injury Prevention.
- Surveillance of occupational exposure to bloodborne pathogens using the EPINet system
- Preventing and controlling exposure to hazardous drugs
- Addressing workplace violence
- Success stories, education and initiatives

For a full list of activities covered at the Academy, please see: [http://www.uems-occupationalmedicine.com/userfiles/1st SEEWA 2011-Information 21 03 11-3\(1\).pdf](http://www.uems-occupationalmedicine.com/userfiles/1st_SEEWA_2011-Information_21_03_11-3(1).pdf)

Development of the Construction Safety Audit Scoring System (ConSASS) and the Workplace Safety and Health Appraisal Tool in Singapore

By Dr HO Sweet Far, Senior Consultant (OSH Specialist), Mr CHAN Yew Kwong, Deputy Director (OSH Inspectorate), Mr GO Heng Huat, Deputy Director (OSH Specialist), Mr Alvian TAN, Senior Specialist (WSH Institute), Mr LIM Ronnie, Senior Specialist (OSH Specialist)



Construction Safety Audit Scoring System
The audit tool for an objective assessment of the safety and health management systems at worksites

The Occupational Safety and Health Division, Ministry of Manpower, Singapore has developed

the Construction Safety Audit Scoring System (ConSASS), an audit tool that provides an assessment of the occupational safety and health management system (OSHMS) at a construction site. As a Collaborating Centre within the Workplan of the WHO CC's Network in Occupational Health, this division has spearheaded the first attempt by the construction industry in Singapore to formulate a more universal audit tool that may be applicable to most worksites.

In Singapore, construction worksites with project contract sum of S\$30 million or more are required to appoint an independent external auditing organization to audit the OSHMS of the worksite at least once every 6 months. Approved safety auditing organizations are required to adhere to an established audit protocol when conducting audit of the OSHMS in a worksite. However, the existing auditing checklists, which vary among the audit organizations, may not adequately provide a good and consistent indication of the level of safety maturity of the contractors. As approved auditing organizations use their own scoring system to grade the performance of the implementation of OSHMS at different worksites, developers are also unable to identify the better contractors during the tendering process. As a result, there is a lack of strong business imperatives for contractors to take a serious view towards safety audits.

In addition, the construction sector remains one of the riskier sectors in Singapore. In 2010, the industry accounted for more than half of all workplace fatalities, with a fatality rate of 8.1 per 100,000 workers. The apparent lack of sustained improvements in OSH performance coupled with a weak OSH culture in the industry has made it more important to increase our efforts to improve the OSH performance of the industry. This has brought on impetus for the development of a robust and comprehensive rating system to raise standards of the construction sector.

Central to ConSASS is the audit checklist and score card that are used for the evaluation of the effectiveness and development status of the worksite's OSHMS being audited. These were developed in partnerships with academic institutions and various stakeholders such as Building and Construction Authority, Nanyang Technological University, the then Workplace Safety and Health Construction Advisory Subcommittee, and various auditing companies. The checklist, containing approximately 300 questions, is referenced after local OSHMS standards and the Universal Assessment Instrument (UAI) tool developed by the University of Michigan and published by the American Industrial Hygiene Association (AIHA). During the final phase of development, trials were carried out with over 24 worksites with the assistance rendered by private auditors. Training on the use of ConSASS was also provided to auditors.

The Audit Checklist

The checklist encompasses approximately 300 questions and they are structured along Deming's Plan-Do-Check-Act (PDCA) cycle as follows:

- OSH Policy (Plan)
- Planning (Plan)
- Implementation and operation (Do)
- Checking and corrective action (Check)
- Management review (Act)



With a standardized audit checklist and a common audit scoring system, ConSASS enhances the consistency in the auditing process. By providing a clear overview of the strengths and weaknesses of their OSHMS, this allows for cross comparison across worksites in terms of the capabilities in managing safety and health risks. It also helps in promoting OSH standards in Singapore by enabling stakeholders to create a profile of OSH performance for the construction industry.

ConSASS is a key tool to use in working towards the achievement of sustainable workplace safety and health improvements:

- It has achieved its initial aim of providing a unified assessment method in terms of standardization of audit checklist and adoption of a common audit scoring system.
- It allows contractors to systematically identify areas of weakness in safety management and take practical measures to improve their scores.
- It provides consistency to the auditing process and allows easy cross comparison of worksites in terms of capabilities in managing safety and health risk.

In 2007, when it was first launched as a voluntary system, ConSASS already had the support of many industry stakeholders, including major developers such as City Development Limited and contractors like Foster Wheeler, Straits Construction and Gammon Construction have pledged their support. Government agencies like Land Transport Authority (LTA) and Housing Development Board (HDB) have also committed to getting their contractors on board. Many other stakeholders amongst property developers, auditors as well as building contractors voiced support for the system and expressed that they would adopt ConSASS at their worksites. During its first year of implementation, a total of 37 audits have been conducted using ConSASS. Four years after its launched, ConSASS is now a mandatory tool for auditing of OSHMS for construction worksites having a contract sum S\$30 million or more.

Following the successful adoption of ConSASS in Singapore, the Workplace Safety and Health (WSH) appraisal tool was developed. It is based on the Universal Assessment Instrument, Singapore Standard for Occupational Safety and Health Management

System (SS506) [SS 506 is a full adoption of OHSAS 18000 series] and Singapore Standard CP 79 Code of Practice for Safety Management System for Construction Worksites. This tool incorporates the 21 measurement criteria in UAI under five driving factors (management commitment, employee participation and training, OSH systems and practices, OSH expertise and line ownership) and the Deming's Cycle of Plan-Do-Check-Act in SS506. The self administered tool helps companies to find out the strength and weakness of their WSH management system so that measures can be put in place to address the gaps identified. It also allows for data and information to be collected for the purpose of providing an indicative trend of the WSH performance of the company against the national WSH performance. It can be used by any workplace for evaluating their own WSH performance and is available free of charge on the internet.

For further information on the WSH tool please visit

<https://www.wshc.sg/wps/portal/wshapt?action=enter&openMenu=3&ns=1#>. We invite all WHO collaborating centres to use this tool and provide feedback on how to enhance this tool further.

For the ConSASS checklist:

<http://app.wshc.gov.sg/cms/Portals/o/WSHC/downloads/ConSASS/ConSASS%20Audit%20Checklist.pdf>

Retrieved 1 Sep 2009.

For the ConSASS scorecard:

<http://app.wshc.gov.sg/cms/Portals/o/WSHC/downloads/ConSASS/ConSASS%20Score%20Card.pdf>

Retrieved 1 Sep 2009.

For a guide to the Construction Safety Audit Scoring System (ConSASS):

<http://app.wshc.gov.sg/cms/Portals/o/WSHC/downloads/ConSASS/ConSASS%20Guide-2007.pdf>

International Certificate Program in Occupational Health Practice Begins in September

At the Great Lakes Centers for Occupational Safety and Health, part of the Department of Environmental and Occupational Health Sciences at the University of Illinois at Chicago, School of Public Health and a WHO Collaborating Centre in Occupational Health, the month of September offers its annual *International Certificate Program in Occupational Health Practice*. The Certificate Program begins in the Fall and is an internet-based, instructor-led distance-learning program for professionals in occupational health services. The program consists of three consecutive courses, each eight to ten weeks in duration that build on each other. To date, a total of 98

participants have taken or are currently enrolled in the program. A total of 25 occupational health and safety professionals from developing countries, working in government agencies (Ministries of Health or Labour), NGOs, social networks or other organizations, received full scholarships from 2009 to 2011 in the form of waivers from the University of Illinois at Chicago.

2011 Updates:

1. Program was expanded with a new track in Occupational Hygiene Practice.
2. Occupational Health Program got CME certification approval for full 130 hours for Course I.
3. New Occupational Hygiene Program was approved for teaching training modules of the Occupational Hygiene Training Academy Association.

Details available at <http://www.uic.edu/sph/glakes/ce/IntPrgOHP.html>

and program brochure at http://www.uic.edu/sph/glakes/ce/Announcement-3rd_IPOHP.pdf

Welcome to the students for September 2011!