

New report highlights value of occupational health

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Occupational Health: The Value Proposition reports are launched today in Australia, New Zealand, and the UK. These discuss the three broad reasons (legal, moral, and financial) why employers provide workers with access to occupational health services and summarises the best available and most recent evidence from around the world for different health interventions in the workplace. This evidence establishes that occupational health services enhance employee health, workforce productivity, business performance and the economy.

A first edition of *Occupational Health: The Value Proposition* was published in 2017 in the UK by The Society of Occupational Medicine (SOM). The Australian and New Zealand Society of Occupational Medicine (ANZSOM) together with the Australasian Faculty of Occupational and Environmental Medicine (AFOEM) decided to commission a local version. This coincided with the 5-year update of the SOM report. ANZSOM and SOM have a memorandum of understanding and in the spirit of collaboration the draft UK report was shared with the ANZSOM report team to bring Australasian context to their report version. Dr Paul Nicholson, author of the UK report and a past president of SOM said he was “*delighted to have been approached by ANZSOM and accelerate the UK update; publishing through a Creative Commons license so ANZSOM and any other organisations could distribute, adapt, and build upon the material for their own use*”.

Lord Blunkett, SOM Patron, said: “*Employers who invest in employee health and wellbeing stand to reap many benefits such as from reduced sickness absence, increased productivity and recruitment and retention. However, not all workers have access to occupational health services and people with disabilities and long-term health conditions continue to be disadvantaged regarding gaining and maintaining employment. As this report proposes, occupational health services enhance employee health, workforce productivity, business performance and the economy.*”

Dr Mary Obele, Consultant Occupational and Environmental Physician, and Fellow of the Australasian Faculty of Occupational and Environmental Medicine (AFOEM) said: “*Occupational health professionals in Australia and New Zealand do their best to promote good work, safe workplaces and healthy workers. Getting ourselves recognised and understood is one of our first challenges. This collaboration helps highlight what we can achieve together.*”

Dr Jayne Moore, SOM President, said: “*This report draws together brilliantly the evidence base to help workplaces remain healthy and safe.*”

To access the UK report and for further information see www.som.org.uk

About The Society of Occupational Medicine:

The Society of Occupational Medicine (SOM) is a multi-disciplinary professional society whose membership includes over 1,850 OH doctors, nurses, physiotherapists, occupational therapists, and technicians.

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About the Australian and New Zealand Society of Occupational Medicine (ANZSOM)

ANZSOM is the professional society for those who practice or have an interest in the fields of occupational medicine, occupational nursing and workplace health more generally in Australia and New Zealand. The society seeks to advance the knowledge, practice and standing of occupational health by providing opportunities for professional development, networking and partnerships. It is committed to supporting its members, and engaging with other professionals, governments and relevant organisations to promote good work, safe workplaces and healthy workers.

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About occupational health:

- Occupational health (OH) helps people of working age access and stay in appropriate work and live full and healthy working lives despite underlying disabilities or health conditions. Occupational clinicians help employers reduce sickness absence and increase productivity by providing advice on best practice and how to comply with legal duties. They advise on fitness for work, return to work, workplace adjustments to enable people with health conditions to return to/remain at work, suitable alternative work, and early retirement due to ill health.
- OH clinicians interpret the instructions of the government and the most up-to-date clinical evidence to support businesses in keeping their workforce well. They use their combination of clinical expertise and deep understanding of how health affects work to empower managers and employers to make the right decisions, at the right time, to ensure the health both of their employees and their businesses e.g., what employers should do when workers are pregnant and what steps managers should take with their older and more vulnerable employees.
- The need for robust and increasing OH services in many sectors has been highlighted during the COVID-19 crisis. The need for advice from OH on all aspect of business policy, control measures and how to protect workers has never been greater.