

The CUHK School of Public Health and Primary Care Presents:

Public Health Seminar

“International Perspectives on Occupational Health and Occupational Medicine ”

By

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Date: Friday, 20th August 2010, 1:00 p.m. - 2:00 p.m.

Venue: KCT Communications and Resource Centre, 1/F School of Public Health Building, Prince of Wales Hospital, Shatin

****Light lunch serves at 12:30pm****

Abstract : In some countries the terms ‘occupational health’ and ‘occupational medicine’ are used interchangeably. In the UK, ‘occupational medicine’ is used to refer to the clinical discipline that deals with the diagnosis, management and prevention of occupational ill-health and injury. Occupational health is used as the umbrella term for multidisciplinary activity in regards to improving health at work. Occupational health professionals include clinicians in occupational medicine and non-medical experts in occupational hygiene, ergonomics, toxicology and other disciplines.

In developed countries, occupational health puts considerable emphasis on preventive measures. In developing countries, where provisions exist for occupational health, these often involve occupational health nurses or physicians performing pre-employment medical examinations, or treating occupational and non-occupational illnesses; and safety officers investigating workplace accidents. Occupational health legislation and occupational health standards are often non-existent or outdated in many low-economy countries. Where laws exist, trained and competent enforcement officers may be in short supply. Training at all levels is a pre-requisite for effective inspection and implementation of occupational health and safety measures. In the UK, training for occupational medicine is available for doctors who want to specialize in the discipline. This involves enrolment in a 4-year training program, with academic instruction and an exam leading to membership of the Faculty of Occupational Medicine (RCP, London). Non-specialist shorter duration instruction is also available with an exam for award of a Diploma in occupational medicine (DOccMed). In Ireland, there is a similar process for specialist training, although there is no equivalent DOccMed. The US has centres for residency training for occupational medicine, and at the completion of training Board-eligible physicians may take an exam for Board certification (US Board of Preventive Medicine).

International differences also exist for the way occupational diseases and injuries are compensated. For occupational diseases, there is a reliance on physicians to make the right diagnosis of an occupational disease. This can be difficult in countries where, if at all, only a few hours of time are allocated in the medical curriculum for occupational health instruction. The European Union in an attempt to provide guidance for diagnosing occupational diseases has made available a manual titled 'Information notices on occupational disease: a guide to diagnosis.' Other resources are also available for aiding the practice of occupational health and occupational medicine.

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