

Community Nursing

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Overview of an integrated approach to the role, management and interpretation of special health investigations in a legislated occupational medical surveillance program

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Occupational Medical Surveillance (OccMedSurv) programs are an integral component in the management of occupational health and safety at the workplace. The purpose of such programs is to protect and maintain the health of workers, prevent the development of occupational disease, ensure personnel are fit to perform the job for which they are employed and to provide expert advice on accommodating an ill or injured worker in the workplace without risk to adverse health effects or further compromising existing health conditions. OccMedSurv special health investigations are varied, dependant on an individual workers occupational and medical history, quantified exposures to workplace stressors and the risk of the worker developing resultant adverse health effects from the identified exposures, or posing a resultant risk to others. In order to make medical assessments and conclusions about individual workers health status and fitness to work at a given job in a given environment, it is essential to ensure that all special health investigations for workers included in the OccMedSurv program are performed in line with accepted standards and best practices in order to provide valid and acceptable results for utilization in final decision making which ultimately may have a positive or negative impact on a workers career path. Careful consideration is therefore required with respect to the selection criteria for special occupational health investigations, the performance thereof and the scope of practice of the involved occupational health practitioner, towards making accurate medical conclusions in the best interests of the worker, co-workers and employers.

Biography

Anne Gray has completed her Diplomas in General Nursing and Midwifery at Frere Hospital East London in 1982, Diploma in Community Nursing Science at Cape Technikon in 1987, Certificate in Occupational Health Nursing at University of Stellenbosch in 2000 and BTech in Occupational Health Nursing at Cape Technikon in 2003. She has been practicing Occupational Health Nursing at the Department of Defence (DOD) Regional Occupational Health and Safety Centre, Simon's Town Cape Town since 2003 providing Occupational Medical Surveillance services to the personnel of the DOD in the Western Cape region.

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