Occupational Health Nursing Practitioner as a member of the Management Team Ms L Pretorius (B Soc Sc HON), Corobrik Pty (Ltd) Edenvale, South Africa

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Introduction: The new role of the Occupational health nursing practitioner (OHNP) may no longer be defined by a given title, but rather by those functions encompassed which add value to the organization. Role theory provides insight into the evolution of the OHNP as a member of the management team. In the past job titles or roles have been established to identify the OHNP contribution to the organization and therefore the stereotyping of the OHNP in his/her position. These roles did not allow the OHNP to perform across segments of the organization.

Method: Literature reveals that managers at different levels of the organization require varying amounts of technical and conceptual skills in carrying out their responsibilities. In the changing role of the OHNP the appropriate mix of these skills changes. Fewer technical skills tend to be needed as one advance to the higher levels in the organization; however the conceptual skills become increasingly necessary. Management functions in the 1990’s were defined in an area of attention to quality improvement as well as cost management. Lusk (1988) saw the OHNP role as encompassing greater managerial responsibility for developing cost effective programmes. Martin (1993) replicating the Lusk study reported that from an employers perspective, the most important function concerns cost effective alternatives for health care programmes.

In a position statement published by the AAOHN (1994) “The Occupational Health practitioner as manager” it specifies that the OHNP provides the continuity necessary for the provision of an effective and efficient Occupational Health and Safety programme. More ever it emphasizes that the managerial responsibility should be recognized as the OHNP function as a member of a management team.

Results: The activities or functions evident in the managerial role require a mixture of knowledge and skills. Three general categories of skills have been identified that managers and leaders must possess technical, human behaviour and conceptual skills. Using a model as a framework for the nursing process, The OHNP must blend expertise with visionary but realistic approach. An accurate understanding of and the responsiveness to parameters of a given work site are important when designing and carrying out an Occupational health nursing management role. Tailoring the role to work with the philosophy of management facilitates team cohesiveness.

Conclusion: OHNP role can encompasses programme development, co ordination, implementation and evaluation; consultation and education for employees and managerial staff – proactive leadership and participation at the worksite and in the community. Any environment is continually evolving with constraints, such as budget shortages and re organization. The OHNP must be prepared to fulfil a multi facetted role.

Biography
Louwna Preorius obtain a B.SOC SC Hon Degree and additional qualifications in Community health/Occ health Nursing/ Nursing management and Nursing Education and served as a SHE consultant / lecturer and auditor over the past 22 years. She is currently completing her Masters degree on Health Service management. She published various article and contributed as co authors in three occ health and health services management prescribed books. She is the SCOHN / SASOHN past president and a member of ICOH.

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