



Occupational Health Nurse's in Champagne County from the Occupational Health & Safety Department



Clotilde Harakat and Frederic Deschamps*

UF Occupational Pathology and Occupational Health (Sevastopol Hospital, Reims University Hospital), France

***Corresponding author:** Frederic Deschamps, UF Occupational Pathology and Occupational Health (Sevastopol Hospital, Reims University Hospital), France

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Editorial

The Early XXith marked the beginning of a new era for nurses working in Occupational Health Ward. They won't come any more to this service to end up their career by only doing routine analysis or vaccinations. In France, it was as from as 20 years ago, that a specific occupational health diploma was created for nurses. Work evolution and nurse skills' recognition have never stopped growing.

The permanent decline of demographics in occupational health physicians was the subject of considerable discussion since ten years. The best solution has been to recruit nurses in the occupational health wards. The aim of occupational health services is to assess and identify risks for employees at their workstation and then, to put forward new ideas to the company so it could improve by job adjustment. In the past, there were only medical consultations by physicians. Nowadays, occupational health nurses' consultations may take stock, at first, on the state of employees' health. These nurses' consultations identify the risks of the job and ensure that the company can offer personal and collective protective equipment (primary prevention). Furthermore, the nurse's "paramedical" skills enable to search effectively for symptoms suggestive of disorders that are likely to be related to job exposures (secondary prevention).

The occupational health physician must accomplish many tasks. Then, he cannot ensure alone, in particular, all the appointments. In fact, he needs to refocus on its main functions, with an emphasis on the missions that require a high degree of medical expertise.

The missions entrusted to nurses have evolved as much as the doctor-nurse duo has improved in this particular societal context. The nurse must perform these consultations according to a protocol established by the doctor. Therefore, occupational health physician and nurse must share and exchange informations on employee files. They also study together the implementation of actions in the workplace environment.

Companies expect from Health occupational services a chosen intermediary they can rely on and that is available for their employees. Those needs have increased with new occupational illnesses as musculoskeletal disorder or psychosocial risks related to work. The occupational health nurse ensures, yesterday as today, the first emergency care. In addition, currently, its mission of listening to the benefit of employees has grown considerably.

Indeed, the occupational health nurse does a job of listening to the considerable singular difficulties that the employees can talk about (for instance, recognition of the status of disabled worker, organizational & relational difficulties, need of training, etc...). She also carries out consultations for employees who suffer from their work. She may as well perform studies on workstation.

At the same time, this listening skill is used for a collective level. The occupational health nurse participates in the various meetings of the joint bodies of companies (Health & Safety Committee, maintenance of the employment of the agents affected by a severe disease) and in groups of reflection such as the watch cell of psychosocial risks.... to carry out reflection centered on the welfare at work. These meetings or think tanks aim to improve working conditions.

Of course, occupational health nurse must visit companies she's working for to site complement the knowledge that she must have about the company, its culture and risks. Occupational Health nurse, as a permanent staff, also provides training for students in the department.

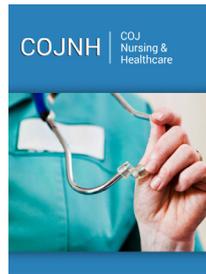
To conclude, the Occupational Health nurse becomes from now on, the unavoidable co-worker, hub of the Occupational Health and Safety Team supervised by the Occupational Health physician.



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