New Programme Director

We are pleased to announce that Dr Dil Sen started in the role of Senior Clinical Lecturer (and Director of the Occupational Medicine programmes) in January 2015. Dr Sen has had several years’ involvement with COEH as an honorary lecturer and we are delighted that he has taken on this challenging role.

Thou shalt not covet another colleague’s job! Well I had committed that sin, I confess, and the job where I had done my Occupational Medicine training all those years ago (1992 to be precise), where I had given my time as an Honorary in the teaching of postgraduates and undergraduates for more years than I care to remember, was the very job I had been coveting for some years.

The problem for me was that there was someone already in it and she was pretty good at it! But strange things do happen and, as my father used to say when he was alive, “whatever happens is meant to be”. And so there was a retirement, an advert followed by an interview (a very daunting prospect as the last interview I had done was over 25 years ago!), in which I was successful, and on 2 January this year I began yet another chapter in my medical career, moving out from being a Regulator to a Teacher.

Returning to COEH now as a salaried member of staff feels very much like coming home to me.

The Eleventh Commandment...

We in COEH have been greatly saddened by the recent deaths of two of our PhD students, Fauziah Nordin and Bashar Altakroni.

We learned of Fauziah’s death in Malaysia in December 2014. Fauziah was a popular member of COEH and was well-regarded by fellow students and staff alike. She leaves behind a husband and young children and our thoughts and prayers are with her family at such a difficult time.

Bashar died suddenly in February this year whilst working in the lab at the University. Bashar was a quiet, unassuming and modest man who, like Fauziah, was liked by all in COEH. Again, our thoughts are with his family back in Syria.

Both students had done very well in their vivas and Bashar had recently received official confirmation of his PhD award and begun work as a post-doc here at the University. Their loss has been keenly felt here in the department and both will be greatly missed.
Prof Raymond Agius and Dr Adrian Hirst were both invited to speak at the National School of Occupational Health (NSOH) conference in London on 9th March 2015. The NSOH has assumed responsibility for managing the quality of all postgraduate medical training in occupational medicine in England and is working towards expanding its remit to include training in other occupational health disciplines. The conference invited stakeholders from the fields of occupational hygiene, medicine, nursing, physiotherapy and psychology to share their views on interdisciplinary education in occupational health. Raymond and Adrian illustrated the long standing and highly successful postgraduate education in occupational health at the COEH at the University of Manchester, which already incorporates more than one occupational health discipline (hygiene and medicine) with common core teaching, as well as strong discipline specific components.

RESEARCH
Research led by COEH Research Fellow, Dr Jill Stocks has recently been published. Using research data from the THOR scheme the study revealed that the incidence of dermatitis has increased 4.5 times in health care workers following increased hand hygiene as a result of a drive to reduce infections such as MRSA.

Dr Stocks said: "Campaigns to reduce these infections have been very successful and many lives have been saved. However, we need to do all we can to prevent skin irritation among these frontline workers."

The implications of increasing levels of irritant dermatitis are potentially counter-productive to the aims of infection-reducing campaigns. Other studies have identified that infections can remain present for longer on damaged and broken skin and having irritated skin can put people off washing their hands.

The paper: The impact of national level interventions to improve hygiene on the incidence of irritant contact dermatitis in healthcare workers: changes in incidence from 1996-2012 and interrupted times series analysis was published in the British Journal of Dermatology.

Prevention of healthcare associated infections became an NHS priority in 1999 and successive campaigns have emphasised the washing of hands with soap or alcohol hand rub by staff, patients and visitors. This has been a success, with a reduction of infections reported and a greatly increased use of cleaning products.

September 2010. It’s the first Sunday the Emirates A380 flies from Dubai to Manchester. I am sitting in a first class suite on the upper deck waving regally to the hordes who have gathered around the airport periphery. Then the aerobridge ascends, ascends… and stops, unable to reach the upper deck due to technical issues. Deflated, I file out with the economy passengers and head to the University to sit an exam. Welcome to the UK.

This story sums up the triumphs and ironic moments that have punctuated my life in occupational medicine so far.

For several years, I worked in Dubai for Emirates as a GP and aeromedical examiner, having been lured from the Royal Australian Air Force by the promise of exotic and comfortable travel. Airline medicine is fascinating. Not only do you deal with a gamut of unusual infectious illnesses and chronic diseases, but all the psychosocial aspects of expatriates living in a foreign country.

The aspect I found most fascinating was managing the occupational hazards of flight and cabin crew, engineers and baggage handlers. Professor Tar-Ching Aw and Dr Raymond Johnston first inspired me to consider moving from general practice to occupational medicine. I commenced the MSc course in 2010, as it could be completed through distance learning yet provided the opportunity to meet other students from the UK and overseas during residential sessions.

The high quality of teaching enabled me to obtain the Faculty DOccMed and opened many doors; I was offered my current job in aviation and occupational medicine at NATS and moved to the UK to start specialty training in 2012. In the same year I was appointed trainee representative for the Faculty, which has provided a fascinating insight into the challenges facing our specialty. My dissertation assessed the understanding of air traffic controllers with specialty. My dissertation assessed the understanding of air traffic controllers with specialty. My dissertation assessed the understanding of air traffic controllers with specialty. My dissertation assessed the understanding of air traffic controllers with specialty. My dissertation assessed the understanding of air traffic controllers with specialty. My dissertation assessed the understanding of air traffic controllers with specialty. My dissertation assessed the understanding of air traffic controllers with specialty. My dissertation assessed the understanding of air traffic controllers.