A study to assess the knowledge of occupational health issues amongst the medical profession

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this study was to explore doctors’ knowledge of occupational health.

Doctors perceptions of what an occupational health service may be able to offer in the way of services were also investigated.

A questionnaire was developed to assess knowledge of 7 occupational health issues. The questionnaire was validated using 4 independent occupational health departments. A total of 1,640 doctors and 160 final year medical students were sent the questionnaire with a response rate of 644 (35.77%).

Knowledge scores in each of the 7 questions on occupational health amongst the sampled Doctors never reached the same level as that of the validating questionnaires. In each case the replies given by the doctors were analysed against those given by the occupational health professionals for the same question. A chi-square test of association was performed on each of the seven questions. This confirmed that there was a significant difference between the two sets of responses in every question p<0.001 in every case.

The results suggest that doctors as a group appear to have a rudimentary understanding of occupational health and related issues. Before further money and investment is made for occupational health provision for the medical profession, the medical profession as a whole needs to be educated about the most basic of occupational health issues as well as the functions of an occupational health department.

Key words: Doctors, knowledge, occupational health, education