

January 2002

Annual Presentation by Dr.Nerys Williams

Dr.Nerys Williams thanked the committee and members of BHSEA for appointing her as Vice-President of the Association. This is very much supported both by Linda Williams, Divisional Director for Midlands, HSE, and also Dr Adrian Ellis, the Director of Field Operations, in London.

Nerys continued by saying that HSE's priority and that, it hopes, of organisations such as BHSEA, is the **Revitalising Health and Safety** agenda. In this, action is focused on outcomes and on delivering measurable improvements in occupational health and safety. Targets which have been set aim to: -

- Reduce the incidence of work related ill health by 20%
- Reduce ill health in the public caused by work activity by 20%
- Reduce the numbers of days lost due to work related ill health by 30%
- Increase awareness of opportunities for rehabilitation and opportunities for people not in work due to disability or ill health.

These must be achieved by 2010 and so it is essential that, in order to be successful, strong partnerships are needed and there is a specific need to engage employers, i.e. those who control the purse strings, in moving towards this agenda.

Traditionally, the emphasis was on preventing harm resulting directly from work but now the agenda is much wider. It now covers both the effects of health on work and the effects of work on health and is far more holistic. Revitalising is complemented by the Security Health Together strategy which provides a clear national framework for taking up the challenge of improving the health of workers and those affected by work. It is supported by nine government departments and HSE has been pleased with the amount of business buy in that has occurred so far. There are 4 main principles in Securing Health Together: -

- 1 Partnership working
- 2 Targets
- 3 Evaluation
- 4 Sharing information on good practise

There have already been a number of successes, case studies of which are available on the www.ohstrategy.net website. One describes Wigan & Lee NHS Trust which reduced the costs of injuries due to manual handling from £800,000 to £25,000 over a six year period to 1999.

These are also exciting times in developments in occupational health and Nerys mentioned: -

- **NHS Plus** which was launched in November 2001 and forms a network of occupational health departments within the NHS, who all have achieved or aspired to achieve certain standards of occupational health service.
- Provision of an Occupational Health Service for GPs
- Discussions about an Occupational Health service for the construction sector, its constitution and how it will be funded
- A number of national and local initiatives such as the Sheffield Occupational Health Development Group and Sandwell Area Health NHS Trust running seminars for small and medium sized businesses on key work related ill health topics.

Nerys also expressed confidence in BHSEA's ability to help with this agenda and help HSE with a firm partnership which engages employers which communicates and convinces the benefits of occupational health and rehabilitation, and which exchanges information on quality occupational health services. She added that there was also the "**Top 350**" initiative, in which the Chairman of the HSC, Bill Callaghan and the Director-General of the HSE had written to the Chief Executives of 350 of the top companies in the Stock Exchange. In this letter, they urged Companies to include Health and Safety performance figures in their Annual Reports. The effect on the bottom line for UK industry is a massive £10 billion annual cost of ill-health!

Nerys concluded by saying that this is an exciting time to be involved in occupational health. We must make more of what we do, both in HSE and in BHSEA, but the key to the future is partnerships. Once again, Nerys thanked the Association for the invitation to be Vice-President – President-Elect of the Association.

The new Chairman, **David Hughes**, thanked Nerys for her very important presentation on the way forward and asked the members to add their thanks in the time-honoured way. He went on to thank the out-going Chairman, **Harry Jakeman** for his leadership in these past two years and also Liz and Andy Chappell for their contribution to the development of the Association. He then went on to thank the members for attending and made an appeal for new faces to join the BHSEA Council. With that, he closed the meeting.