



OHNAI APRIL 2021 NEWSLETTER

**BRAIN FOG - TOP TIPS
TO ACHIEVE OPTIMAL
BRAIN FUNCTION**

**OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND
SARS-COV-2 (COVID-19)**

**UPCOMING
WEBINARS**

President's Address

Dear Members,

Welcome to our latest Newsletter

Last year had been a most challenging and busy year in Occupational Health and will certainly be remembered as 'the year of Covid 19 Pandemic'. This year more than ever work of Occupational Health Services has been an integral part of organisations and businesses in ensuring employees and workplaces are safe. I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the amazing work all Occupational Health Nurse/Advisors have done throughout this year, while continuing to work endlessly throughout the pandemic.

Due to the pandemic, our plans for the 2020 Conference in February were suddenly put on hold. Now we are becoming more accustomed to the 'new normal' way of working and interacting with Teams, Zoom and digital platforms, we will be scheduling virtual study days/webinars in 2021.

In early November Catherine O'Keeffe, wellness warrior, presented an interactive talk for members on 'Menopause in the Workplace' via zoom. Catherine's excellent presentation, along with a very helpful Q&A session included symptoms & treatments, practical steps at work and home & dispelling the myths.

FOHNEU (Federation of Occupational Health Nurses within the European Union) of which OHNAI is a member, plans to launch a new journal in 2021, EJOHN. This scientific journal will be a high quality, peer reviewed open access journal and will also be shared with OHNAI members.

The OHNAI AGM was held on 17th September and minutes of the meeting were sent out to all members. I would like to take this opportunity to thank our outgoing, dedicated committee for their time and commitment to the Association during 2020.

Welcome 2021 Committee;

Position currently vacant - President

Elaine Martyn - Secretary /email Moderator

Caroline Kevitt - Website/IT Moderator

Daragh Devane - Newsletter Editor

Vivienne Mulligan – Education Officer

Ann Colohan – Treasurer

Lorraine Begley –Committee Member & outgoing Treasurer

Colette Moriarty - Committee Member

A very warm welcome to our two new committee members Vivienne and Colette. The role of a Committee member is voluntary and members meet about 6 times/year to work on plans for providing educational presentations and providing updates to members throughout the year. We would encourage members to join the committee, if you are interested you can contact us anytime during the year on the email below.

Membership subscriptions are now due and we will send a reminder to members in May 2021. Your continued support is welcomed and any feedback or suggestions greatly appreciated. Please contact us on ohnaireland@gmail.com

Wishing you and your families a safe and a very happy 2021!

Kindest Regards,

Ann Colohan - Outgoing OHNAI President



BRAIN FOG

Catherine O'Keeffe kindly provided us with this article as a follow up to her 'Let's Talk Menopause' Webinar in November

In Traditional Chinese Medicine, menopause and the accompanying age is revered by society – a woman is seen as at her pinnacle of wisdom and a source of vital support for her community. In the West the story is different, at perimenopause the typical woman is running after kids, ageing parents, doing a job, dashing to get food for dinner. In that dash the supermarket run – your mental list comprises three items, but by the time you get there they are totally gone from your head – inspiration doesn't come as soon as you enter the supermarket either! Your phone rings, it's a work call (you forgot your 1pm meeting), texts are coming in on evening activities for the kids. All the while you're still trying to remember the 3 items – you get 2 but one remains elusive. You rush back to work.

Seriously it's multi-tasking at the extreme – our poor brains. Women carry very heavy mental loads and when this is constant our brains need support. Your brain is changing as you age – in another world we would have 'staff' to help with all this 'stuff'. In menopause we should be promoted to Chief of Staff – managerial level!

Brain fog is one of the heavy hitters in perimenopause. You go to the press, you haven't a clue what you were looking for, you're talking to someone familiar

and completely forget their name. It's so common and it is unfortunately all part of the process – as we get older our circulation slows down so less oxygen is being circulated around the body and the brain. Also as oestrogen stimulates the neurotransmitters in the brain, the changing hormone levels that come at midlife slow down these neurotransmitters and so our brains aren't working at optimum. End result our brain isn't as sharp as it was in our 20's. So many women report fears of dementia, fear of losing their mind and it certainly feels like that – the good news is there are many ways to improve our brain function and eliminate the brain fog/cloudiness.

There is a whole new area of research emerging called Neuro Nutrition which reinforces the importance of taking care of our brain health and this approach looks at the body as a whole and not just the brain. The gut-brain connection has been around for a number of years now and this certainly reinforces the impact that our daily nutrition has on our brains – at all life stages.

With healthy lifestyle choices, reduced stress and nutritional support we can help our brains both heal and regenerate. (cont.)

- TOP TIPS TO ACHIEVE OPTIMAL BRAIN FUNCTION -

Neuro Nutrition

Omega 3 Fatty Acids elite brain food

The Mediterranean diet consists of foods rich in Omega 3 and offers great support in perimenopause and menopause to maintain optimal brain function. Omega 3 is the only fat that consistently goes into the brain.

Sources: Chia seeds, flaxseeds, extra virgin olive oil, sardines, anchovies, mackerel.

Dark Green Leafy Vegetables

These contain phytonutrients which are strong antioxidants. As such they also enhance gut health and help in the ageing process.

Sources: Broccoli, Kale, mixed greens

Eat the rainbow

Fruit, Vegetables and Grains are another powerful source of anti-oxidants, the rule of thumb is the brighter the colour, the better, they are a rich powerhouse of antioxidants and anti-ageing chemicals.

Sources: Blackberries (higher in Vitamin C than blueberries), apples, sweet potatoes, parsnips, brown rice, buckwheat. Recent research indicated the gooseberry or known in Indian as Amla as being the highest anti-oxidant known.



Prebiotics/Probiotics

As a second brain, the gut communicates regularly with our brain, affecting our moods and energy levels. Recent research indicates 70% of our body's serotonin (the feel good hormone) is made in the gut. Probiotics provide significant antioxidant protection and lessen the risk of developing a number of inflammation-based conditions that can affect the brain. Prebiotics are the food the probiotics will thrive and grow on.

Sources: Probiotics: milk kefir, fermented foods. Prebiotics: garlic, white onions, apple cider vinegar

Water

Dehydration is no friend to the brain or to perimenopause. It has a huge impact on anxiety and brain fog. Water is essential for optimal brain function, it prevents dehydration and increase the blood's circulation – both of which keep away cognitive decline and nerve damage.

Ensure a minimum of 8 glasses of water a day and ideally this should be good mineral/spring water via a filtration system. The minerals in water are as essential as the water itself – this is why coconut water has such powers as a rehydration water due to the minerals / electrolytes.

Avoid alcohol, too much alcohol has a definitive impact on our brain functioning and if you do experience 'foggy brain' then I would certainly suggest staying away from it, as even one glass a day will impact you if you are already experiencing symptoms of brain fog.

Supplements

B Vitamins are really important for the brain with the emphasis on Vitamin B6, Vitamin B12, Folic Acid and Choline. If you don't get enough Omega 3 in your diet it is worth looking at a good supplement as this is one of the most important nutrients in perimenopause.

Exercise

Exercise has been promoted as a possible preventer of neuro generative disease – this includes both physical and brain exercises. Aerobic exercise has been linked to significant increase in brain volume and cognitive function in midlife. It is also believed that exercise has an anti-inflammatory effect that promotes brain health.

The ideal is 5 times per week in 30 minute intervals where you get to the stage of feeling breathlessness, this gives oxygen to the body and also release the feel good hormones.

Exercise for the brain can be any of the following, learning a new language, knitting, puzzles, using your non dominant hand to colour or write for a few minutes each day, read a book outside of your normal reading list. You can also check out some Apps – I'm currently using Peak-Brain Training but there are loads out there to choose from.

Relaxation

Look at the daily stressors in your life and look at ways you can eliminate or reduce them, the less stress in your life the greater your ability to really focus and pay attention. Also consider some form of daily relaxation like mindfulness or meditation that gives your brain a complete rest and respite from the busyness of life.

Sleep

None of us functions at our optimum when we have missed a few hours of good deep sleep. Our brain needs this down time to process the day's events and renew itself. It's a time for rest. When you have had a night of hot flushes or night sweats, you will automatically feel more tired the following day, as your body is tired so too is your brain.

Review your sleep hygiene and consider making small tweaks to ensure you are getting your required amount of sleep per night – for some people its 6 hours, for others 8.

Don't forget, here is a link to Catherine O'Keeffe's website for further information and tips:
www.wellnesswarrior.ie





OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SARS-COV-2 (COVID-19)

Dr Deirdre Gleeson, Specialist in Occupational Health, Medwise, Naas, Dublin, Limerick

Covid-19 & the Occupational Health Team

Severe acute respiratory syndrome Corona virus 2 SARS-Cov 2 is a novel corona virus first identified in 2019. The virus causes the Corona virus disease 2019; Covid-19, a severe respiratory illness that in 20% of cases results in acute respiratory distress syndrome ARDS of such severity that 5% of patients require ventilation and ICU care. It is of some comfort that 80% of people who acquire the infection will have a mild course of disease and it is believed that approximately 15% of cases are asymptomatic. However, the elderly and those with underlying medical conditions are most at risk of severe disease and death and require special protection.

SARS-CoV2 is transmitted by respiratory droplet. The virus enters the body through the mucous membranes of the mouth, nose or eyes from a direct cough or the persons contaminated hands touching their face. People are infectious for 2 days prior to the onset of symptoms and 10 days after the onset of symptoms and /or 5 days from the last high temperature.

Under The Safety Health and Welfare at Work (General Applications) Regulations 2007 the employer is obliged to provide a workplace that is safe and without risk to health. The employer is obliged to implement a comprehensive infection prevention and control IPC programme to reduce the risk of the virus entering the workplace and to eliminate as far as reasonably possible viral transmission in the workplace and to respond promptly to known or suspected cases of Covid 19 among the workforce. The employee also has a duty to take reasonable steps to protect their own health and that of others and to comply with IPC measures.

The employers approach to Covid-19 requires a comprehensive program with multiple strategies involving many stakeholders including HR, health and safety and the occupational health OH team. The role of OH is advisory and clinical. The OH team will give advice on preventative and supportive measures. The OH team will also conduct clinical assessment of individual employees who are directly affected by Covid-19 to encourage compliance with medical advice and to ensure that employees are fit for work and not a risk of infection to other people at work.

Infection Prevention & Control

The principles of prevention and the hierarchy of control apply to Covid-19. Engineering methods and administrative measures take precedence to personal protective equipment PPE which is the last line of defence and least effective intervention. Employers have shown tremendous innovation in adapting their business to protect staff and customers against SARS Cov2. Facilitating remote working, staggering start and finish times and breaks, slowing down production lines to allow social distancing, use of Plexiglas screens and ubiquitous hand hygiene stations are examples of measures to reduce the risk of transmission of the virus in the workplace.



An important element of the Covid-19 management strategy in any organisation is screening and prevention at the point of entry. This includes three aspects: (1) symptom questionnaire, (2) temperature check, and (3) hand hygiene. A suitably trained manager should administer and oversee the programme at the start of every shift. Employees should be encouraged to declare any

symptoms or concerns and facilitated in making the right choices to protect their own health and that of their colleagues. It is important to understand that screening for any disease is not diagnostic and no screening tool is ever 100% sensitive or specific and there will always be false positives and false negatives. A positive result on the workplace screen requires further medical assessment to diagnose or out-rule infection. Nevertheless, a screening and prevention program acts as a deterrent to employees who may be ill from attending work and also reassures other employees of a safe place to work.

The screening questionnaire should be simple and should address consent and GDPR issues. The questionnaire should list the main symptoms of Covid-19: cough, fever, breathlessness, altered taste or smell and other flu like symptoms including fatigue, sore throat and runny nose. The questionnaire should ask employees to declare if they have been advised to cocoon, self-isolate or restrict movements (quarantine) in the past fourteen days. Temperature is best checked with an infrared forehead thermometer. For the purposes of Covid-19 infection, a high temperature is over 37.50C. High temperature is present in up to 80% of cases of Covid-19 but can rise and fall. In addition, paracetamol or ibuprofen can mask a high temperature. Repeat the temperature 3 times if there is any doubt. A positive answer to any question and or a high temperature on screening requires further assessment with an occupational health nurse or the employee's G.P. before the employee is permitted to enter the workplace.

The final step of the screening and prevention program at the point of entry is mandatory hand hygiene. The good news is that soap and water kills the virus, because amphiphile particles in soap pull apart the protein and lipid coating on the virus. Alternatively, use 60% to 80% alcohol based gel. Use no-touch taps, dispensers and bins and provide posters to demonstrate good technique. 'No Sanitizer; No Entry'.

Maintaining Social Distance in the Workplace

It can be difficult to maintain physical distance in the workplace at all times. However, this will reduce the likelihood of transmission of the virus among staff and will also ensure that no member of staff is a close contact of other staff or service users in the event of illness. A close contact is somebody who has been within 2 metres of a suspected or confirmed case of Covid-19 for an accumulation of 15 minutes over a day. Close contacts also include people who have spent more than 2 hours in a confined space such as an office. Anyone who has been a close contact of a suspected or confirmed case of Covid-19 during the infectious period must restrict movements for 14 days from the time of the last contact. Employees should take responsibility to keep a close contact log for every shift so that close contacts may be readily identified if necessary. If mobile phones are permitted in the workplace the Covid Tracker App will also help with contact tracing.



Personal Protective Equipment PPE

In work situations where physical distancing cannot be maintained, for example maintenance crew repairing heavy machinery employees should be provided with appropriate personal protective equipment PPE including goggles, disposable face masks, face shields, gloves and overalls. A word of warning; PPE will increase the risk of infection

unless used appropriately. The OH team will provide training in donning and doffing PPE to prevent contamination. Homemade facemasks are not PPE. They are not manufactured to healthcare standards and have unproven bacterial filtration efficiency. Nevertheless, homemade facemasks have a role in reducing the spread of infection in congregate settings such as shops and churches.

Contact Tracing

A close contact is a person who has been within 2 metres during the infectious period of a suspected or confirmed case of Covid-19 for 15 minutes cumulatively over a day, or a person who shared a confined space such as an office for over 2 hours. The national contact tracing team will perform contact tracing on laboratory confirmed cases of Covid-19. The team will interview the person with the positive test result (the case) to identify contacts who will then receive a telephone call advising them to restrict movements for 14 days from the date of last contact.

In the event that an employee declares suspected or confirmed Covid, the line manager should check with the employee and the colleagues to identify potential close contacts who are advised to restrict movements pending the test result. The test is only 75% accurate and people with symptoms of Covid 19 and a negative test are still advised to self-isolate, but close contacts need only continue restricting movements if the test is positive. The occupational health team has a crucial role to play in managing a case of suspected or confirmed Covid-19 in a workplace. Each situation requires a risk assessment with a trained healthcare professional to ensure appropriate and prompt advice on a case by case basis. The OH team will also take necessary steps to protect employee privacy and confidential medical information. Individual results of Covid 19 tests will not be disclosed to the employer without prior consent and the term "Covid leave" may be used for employees absent while self-isolating or restricting movements.

Outbreak

Sometimes despite the employer's best efforts, there is a cluster of Covid 19 cases among staff at a place of work. The Department of Public Health will convene an outbreak control team to investigate the source of infection and take appropriate action to protect the health and safety of the employees and people living in the local community. A cluster is an incidence of cases greater than the background community rate. An outbreak means that cases are linked in time and place and indicates sustained transmission in the workplace and a breakdown of infection control measures. Covid-19 is a notifiable disease and under The Health Act 1947, 1953 (Infectious Disease Regulations 1981 and subsequent), the Medical Officer of Health has the authority to close any business or organisation to remove "conditions favourable to the spread of infection". Documenting and demonstrating adequate infection prevention and control measures will protect an employer against closure due to an outbreak.

Communication

Communication is essential to managing Covid-19 in the workplace. Posters and videos are available in various languages from the HPSC and Nasc. Managers should meet with their team on a regular basis and listen to employees' concerns. SARS Cov2 is a new virus, the scientific community are still learning about the virus and treating infection. The information updates daily. The occupational health team will support education and training and provide up to date facts about SARS Cov2 to assist the management team communicate appropriately with employees for as long as this pandemic prevails. The OH team will also meet with individual employees to address specific health concerns in confidence.

Absence benefits:

People quarantining or self-isolating due to suspected or confirmed Covid-19 illness are entitled to the enhanced illness benefit from the Department of employment affairs and social protection. People cocooning are not entitled to this benefit. However, they are entitled to regular illness benefit and the employer's sick pay scheme.

Employees in the "extremely medically vulnerable" who are obliged to cocoon should submit a letter from the treating doctor. Employees who are in the high-risk group, but who do not fulfil the criteria for cocooning, e.g. hypertension, diabetes and pregnancy are fit for work according to HPSC occupational health guidelines. However, the employer should accommodate requests for leave or alternative work duties as far as practicable. The occupational health team will give advice on fitness for work on a case by case basis and in conjunction with the treating doctors.

Coping with Covid

Covid-19 causes enormous hardship and suffering that affects the workplace in a multitude of ways. The effects of Covid-19 on the safety, health and welfare of employees will be with us for some time to come. Employers face with many difficulties to maintain business and service while at the same time protecting and supporting employees. Promoting workplace wellbeing and providing access to employee assistance service will help employees cope the burthen of Covid-19 and assist building of resilience to adapt to the challenge ahead.



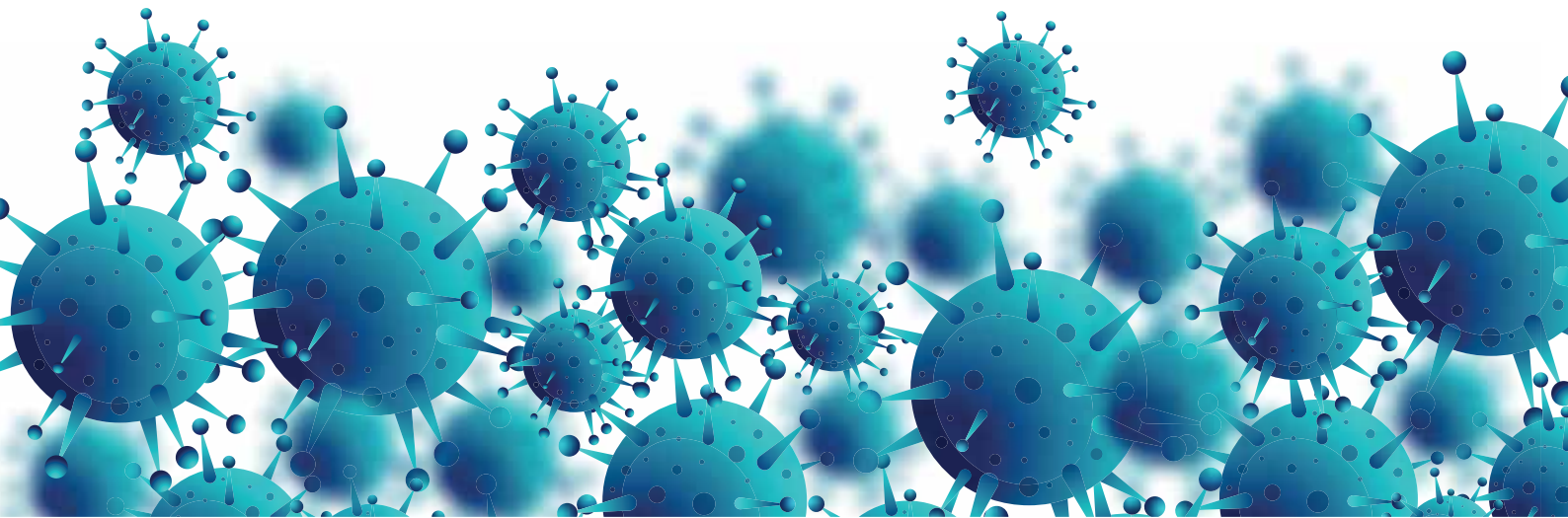
Conclusion:

The employer's approach to Covid-19 requires a comprehensive management approach with multiple strategies and cooperation from all stakeholders. The occupational health team will give general and individual advice on all aspects of infection, prevention control and on fitness for work. The Covid-19 pandemic presents a unique and constantly evolving global challenge. The world is still learning about the SARS-Cov2 virus. As new information emerges the employer must reassess the risks and act in a timely manner to take all reasonable steps to protect the health, safety and welfare of the workforce and to safeguard the survival of the business.

'Asking the question "Are we doing enough?" regularly and repeatedly is critical.' - *Dr. Maria Van Kerkhove, technical lead, WHO, March 2020.*

References:

1. World Health Organisation: www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019
2. European Centre for Disease Control and Prevention: www.ecdc.europa.eu/en/coronavirus
3. Centre for Disease Control and Prevention USA: www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.
4. Health Protection Surveillance Centre: www.hpsc.ie/a-z/respiratory/coronavirus/novelcoronavirus/
5. Health and Safety Authority: www.hsa.ie/eng/topics/covid-19/
6. Health Service Executive: www2.hse.ie/coronavirus/
7. Nasc, migrant and refugee rights: www.nascireland.org/covid-19-world-service



JISC MAIL

Jisc mail is an online forum which discusses OH practice and research. It has over 1,000 subscribers from different countries (including Irish nurses). It is entirely free and the link to subscribe is:

<https://www.jiscmail.ac.uk/cgi-bin/webadmin?A0=OCC-HEALTH>

FAS

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We are delighted to announce that we have arranged a series of Webinars for you all over the coming months.

April 14th 2021 at 7pm

EXPERIENTIAL WELLNESS WORKSHOP

led by Deirdre McKenna
(Wellness Facilitator)

Bio and details on following page

May 6th 2021 at 1.30pm

ERGONOMICS-ISSUES FACING EMPLOYERS IN RELATION TO WORKING FROM HOME

led by Brian Crinion
(Spectrum Optimise)

June 3rd 2021 at 1.30pm

MIGRAINE-WORKPLACE TIPS & ADVICE

led by Sadhbh Armstrong
(Migraine Association of Ireland)

Note: Webinars will each be approx. 1 hour long

We also have more webinars arranged from September onwards from renowned UL lecturer and specialist in Musculoskeletal disorders **Dr. Kieran O'Sullivan** to talk about 'Fitness for work-in relation to Musculoskeletal disorders, pain and injury', and further speakers arranged to cover the topic of 'Long Covid'. Dates and times for these will follow in the coming months.

All webinars will be free to 2021 members, for those non-members who wish to attend, the rate will be €20. This can be paid on the payment section of the OHNAI website by following this link:

<https://www.ohnai.ie/payments>

OHNAI membership is €40 annually and can be paid at the same link above or via bank transfer (bank account details are at the above link also).

For those interested in attending, can you send an email to **ohnaireland@gmail.com** with your name and the webinar(s) that you are interested in attending. A link will then be sent to you closer to the time to join the Webinar.

DEIRDRE MCKENNA BIO

Deirdre is an Occupational Health Nurse, Wellbeing Facilitator and an advanced Yoga teacher

A devout lover of yoga Deirdre has been teaching Vinyasa flow for five years and is dedicated to her own practice of yoga daily. She is the creator, mentor, manager, facilitator and key driver of a local corporate wellness for Cork and has achieved the Global Health Site Award for Cork for three years running. Two years ago, her company at that time won a Global Distinction Award 2019 Ireland for excellence in health and wellbeing by the global business group on health for which she is extremely proud of.

Deirdre, a Cork native, has a keen interest in preventative health and health promotion tracing back as far as her early days embarking on her nursing career. Her nursing led to a passion for promoting health and preventing illness, and so Deirdre followed the path of patient education and health promotion. She has worked as a nurse advisor for diabetes and cholesterol patients, a preventative health screening consultant for top-to-toe medicals for both corporate and private clients, and she has also worked as a practice nurse for a GP practice. Her more recent role was occupational health specialist, manager, key driver and facilitator for well-being in Dell Technologies, Cork.

Deirdre has a deep wish to inspire, uplift, educate and give the gift of personal empowerment towards our own health through education, self-awareness and a good understanding of specific techniques and practices that can help.

With Deirdre's clinical background and holistic health training she has married a system for total wellbeing education and she is a true believer in the statement 'Yoga works'.

Deirdre is happiest teaching others and making a difference which she believes is her purpose.

Most recently Deirdre has set up her own business and now has a range of new products on the market.



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* A Breath and Stretch Workshop for the Office Worker

* Quick 3-minute Micro-Break Sessions for Stretching

COMMITTEE CONTACT DETAILS**President**

Position currently vacant

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Lorraine Begley | lbbegley@gmail.com

**Newsletter articles**

Newsletter articles are always welcome and very much appreciated. Topics can include anything from research, health promotion activities in your workplace, wellbeing, advertisements, posters etc.

There is a €100 paid for each published article greater than 400 words. Also any social news - new births/ marriages etc. - is welcome. Please forward anything you want submitted to:
DDEVANE@its.jnj.com

Thank you,

*Daragh***ADVERTISING TYPE COSTING**

* Newsletter (1/4 A4 page)	€32
* Newsletter (1/2 A4 page)	€65
* Newsletter (1 A4 page)	€130
* Newsletter (insert)	€100
* Conference stand (incl. lunch for one person)	€320
* Insertion of flyer in 'conference pack'	€100
* E-mail	€50
* E-mail and insert in 'job-box' in newsletter	€100
* Flyer (mail shot)	N/A
* OHNAI Website advertisement	€50

All cheques are to be made payable to: OHNAI, PO Box. 5616, Dublin 8

All payments must be received prior to the publishing/circulation of the advertisement

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If you wish to join there are 3 payment methods available:

1. Cheque payable to the OHNAI P.O. Box 5616 Dublin 8
2. Paypal at www.ohnai.ie
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If you have any queries, please contact us via ohnaireland@gmail.com and a committee member will deal with your query.