

The Health and Occupation Research (THOR) network

Newsletter September 2021

Welcome to the THOR Newsletter which provides the latest summary of the cases reported to THOR from April to June 2021.

But first, the THOR team is delighted to announce that we secured funding from the Health and Safety Executive, England, for the next three years. During this time, we plan to carry out several activities to make our reporters' contribution as interesting and rewarding as possible.

We are very keen to try to get THOR reporting levels back to the pre-pandemic levels. Hence, we hope that you will be able to continue reporting cases of occupational ill-health, or, if you haven't reported for a while, that you will be able to re-engage with THOR reporting scheme.

We are pleased to announce that the **Lane Lecture** will be delivered this year by Dr Lesley Rushton, who chairs the Industrial Injury Advisory Committee, on 30th November at 4pm. The title of her lecture is "Long-COVID: Should this be in the occupational disease fast lane?" You can register for the Lane Lecture through the following link:

https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/long-covid-should-this-be-in-the-occupational-disease-fast-lane-tickets-180147745757

We hope you have been enjoying the COEH seminar series, that has been running of nearly one year now, and have covered a wider range of interesting and important topics, delivered by national and international experts in occupational health and medicine. These seminar are open to THOR reporters and our students and staff. We will continue into the new academic year with more exciting talks. For more information on the seminars and if you would like to watch any of the previous lectures, please visit:

https://coeh.manchester.ac.uk/thor/seminars/

Please let us know if you have suggestions for any future seminars, or if you would like to give a seminar yourself! Also, if you have any suggestions to enhance our reporter's experience and engagement, please do not hesitate to get in touch. We would love to hear from you!

Also, don't forget, you can follow us on Twitter and Facebook for all our latest news and updates:





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Summary Statistics this Quarter

Physicians reported 97 actual cases of work-related ill-health to THOR between 1st April and 30th June 2021 (Table 1). Occupational physicians reported 33%, dermatologists reported 21%, chest physicians reported 32% and general practitioners reported 14% of the total number of cases.

Table 1: Number of actual cases and diagnoses reported to THOR between April and June 2021

Scheme	Cases	Diagnoses
OPRA	32	42
EPIDERM	20	24
SWORD	31	43
THOR-GP	14	16
Total	97	125

The mean age of the cases reported to THOR was 48 years old (age range for all cases was 18-82 years). Figure 1 shows the proportion of cases reported by age group to THOR.

Cases reported to THOR were 40% in females and 40% 60% in males.



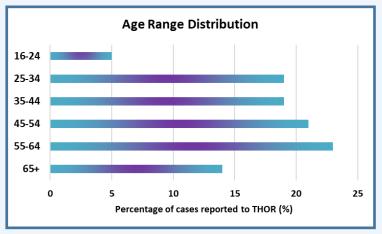


Figure 1: Percentage of cases by age group reported to THOR this quarter.

Across the four different schemes, respiratory diseases were most often reported (40%), followed by mental ill-health (26%), skin diseases (21%) and musculoskeletal disorders (10%) (Figure 2).

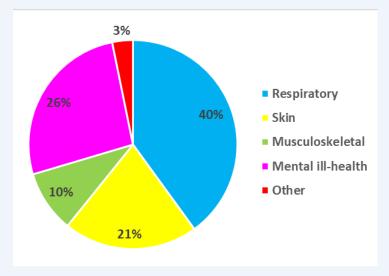
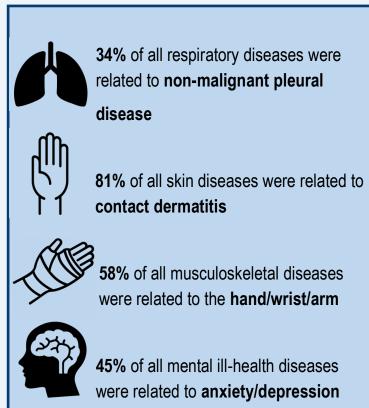


Figure 2: Proportion of diagnoses by disease category reported to THOR this quarter.



Summary Statistics this Quarter - continued

The most frequently reported sector for this quarter was healthcare (30%). Followed by construction (19%), manufacture of motor vehicles and trailers (6%), public administration and defence (5%), social work (4%), food and beverage service (4%), manufacture of chemicals and chemical products (4%), Other industries (with 3 or less cases) made up 28% of the cases reported this quarter (Figure 3).

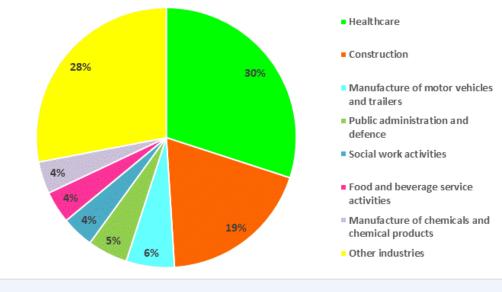


Figure 3: Proportion of industries reported to THOR between April to June 2021.

The most frequently reported occupational group were skilled trades (20%) and professional occupations (20%), followed by process, plant and machine operatives (19%) (Figure 4). The most frequently reported occupations to THOR this quarter were nurses (8%) and medical practitioners (5%).



Figure 4: Proportion of occupational groups reported to THOR between April to June 2021.

Interesting Cases of the Quarter

Martin Seed

(Consultant and Honorary Senior Lecturer in Occupational Medicine at UK NHS & The University of Manchester)

It will be interesting and important to see how the patterns of work related ill-health change in

the years following the pandemic onset. A broad understanding of the baseline situation can be gained by looking at the proportionate distribution of diagnoses reported since 2010 to OPRA (figure 5 overleaf) and THOR-GP (figure 6 overleaf). As might be expected for both these schemes at least 80% of reported diagnoses relate to either musculoskeletal or mental ill-health.



Interestingly the ratio of mental to musculoskeletal ill-health reports is approximately 2:1 for occupational physicians but an even split for GPs. A variety of hypotheses could be offered to explain this difference. For example, GPs are likely to have greater awareness of personal factors involved in their patients' psychological distress and as a result are perhaps less likely to report a case as work related. There may also be different reasons and motives for work attribution of mental health issues by workers presenting to occupational physicians as opposed to GPs.

Interesting Cases of the Quarter (continued)

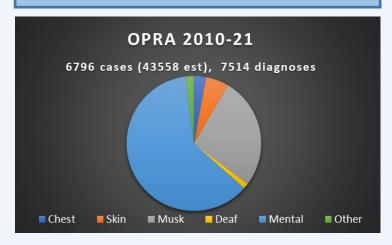


Figure 5: OPRA diagnoses reported 2010-2021

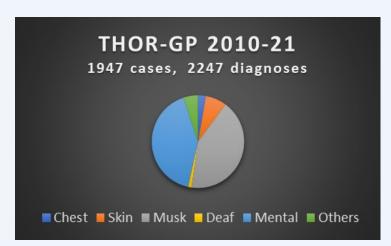


Figure 6: THOR-GP diagnoses reported 2010-2021

The distinction between work and domestic causes of stress related ill-health becomes even more blurred with the increase in numbers of employees working from home, 'WFH' being the latest acronym starting to appear on management referrals to occupational physicians. WFH can have complex interactions with worker health and wellbeing as illustrated by the report by a GP this quarter of low mood, motivation and confidence in a finance sector worker attributed to 'working from home due to Covid-19 lock-down. High work load. Isolated. Some family stress too'. On the other hand, WFH may have perceived benefits to the worker, such as the booking clerk reported by an occupational physician this quarter to have anxiety regarding return to work after shielding due to their perception of risk of exposure to SARS-CoV-2.

Some Recent COEH Publications

Daniels S, Wei H, Han Y, Catt H, Denning DW, Hall I, Regan M, Verma A, Whitfield CA, van Tongeren. medRxiv 2021.04.12.21255302; doi: https://doi.org/10.1101/2021.04.12.21255302 (accepted for publication)

Russ TC, Cherrie MPC, Dibben C *et al.* Life Course Air Pollution Exposure and Cognitive Decline: Modelled Historical Air Pollution Data and the Lothian Birth Cohort 1936. J Alzheimers Dis. 2021;79 (3):1063-1074. doi: 10.3233/JAD-200910.

van der Plaat DA, Madan I, Coggon D, van Tongeren M, Edge R, Muiry R, Parsons V, Cullinan P. Risks of COVID-19 by occupation in NHS workers in England. Occup Environ Med. 2021 Aug 30:oemed-2021-107628. doi: 10.1136/oemed-2021-107628.

Westwell A, Cocco P, Van Tongeren M, Murphy E. Sleepiness and safety at work among night shift NHS nurses. Occup Med (Lond). 2021 Oct 25:kgab137. doi: 10.1093/occmed/kgab137

Events

Lane Lecture 2021 - Long-COVID: should this be in the occupational disease fast lane?

With Guest speaker Dr Lesley Rushton. She is an epidemiologist and statistician with extensive research experience into occupational and environmental causes of ill health.



Date and time:

Tuesday 30th November 2021

16:00 - 18:00 GMT



Register via Eventbrite:

https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/long-covid-should-this-be-in-the-occupational-disease-fast-lane-tickets-180147745757

Seminar Series

This month we are thrilled to have two talks in our seminar series presented by Jérôme Lavoué and Dipti Patel:

<u>Jérôme Lavoué</u>: Tuesday 2nd November 2021, 4pm, "CANJEM and Expostats: tools to evaluate past and current exposures in the workplace".

Register in advance for this seminar:

https://zoom.us/meeting/register/ tJUpdO2rpjooHNLhW8gCRnfsZ4U4kQq5DTJD

<u>Dipti Patel</u>: Monday 22nd November 2021, 4pm, Title TBC, Topic: Travel Medicine.

Register in advance for this seminar:

https://zoom.us/meeting/register/ tJAqfumqrT0pGtlqHonAeL7EqCtyO1jalfU7

Data Request Service

A reminder that we operate a data request service for our reporting physicians, funding bodies, members of the public, research institutions, and other interested parties. Please contact one of the THOR team members using the contact details shown in the table opposite, and we will be happy to answer your request.

Below are just some of the requests we have answered to date in 2021:

Data requests completed in 2021

- Cases of occupational asthma in teachers and teaching assistants, reported to THOR
- Cases of hand dermatitis attributed to glass isomer (ketac cement)
- Cases of work-related audiological disorders, and work related noise induced hearing loss
- The impact of COVID-19 on cases of mental-ill health reported to THOR

Contacts

We hope you enjoy this quarter's newsletter. If you have any further questions about any of our schemes, then please get in touch via one of the contacts listed below. We are always happy to hear from you.

Scheme	Email
EPIDERM / SWORD	laura.byrne@manchester.ac.uk
OPRA / THOR-GP	susan.taylor@manchester.ac.uk
Data requests	ireny.iskandar@manchester.ac.uk
General enquires	ireny.iskandar@manchester.ac.uk
	sarah.daniels@manchester.ac.uk



