

Centre for Occupational and Environmental Health  
The University of Manchester

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**INTERIM REPORT, covering the reporting period: Jan 2021 to March 2021**

Dear colleague,

Enclosed is the latest Interim Report of THOR-ROI, summarising the data that were collected from January to March 2021. The start of 2021 was very difficult due to the resurgence of the number of COVID-19 cases, however, with the successful roll out of the vaccination programme, we can possibly be a bit more optimistic for the rest of the year.

THOR-ROI reporting is gradually picking up again, following a dip in reporting at the start of the pandemic. We strongly encourage you to continue reporting cases of occupational ill-health to the THOR-ROI reporting schemes, including cases of COVID-19 who you suspect will have been infected at work. We are picking up some COVID-19 cases, but only a handful. Clearly, it is very difficult to establish if a patient was infected in the workplace. However, we are keen to receive COVID-19 case reports if work was likely to have played a role.

Finally, I hope that you find the information in this report useful and informative. And I would like to thank you for your continued support and important contributions to THOR-ROI.

Best wishes



Martie Van Tongeren

Professor of Occupational and Environmental Health

## BACKGROUND

This document provides a brief update of the cases reported to the various THOR-ROI reporting schemes during the inclusive period of January to March 2021. This should not be viewed as a 'stand-alone' document but as a supplement to previous interim quarterly reports and 'substantive' annual reports (the most recent of which was submitted in May 2021).

## SUMMARY OF RESULTS

Reporters to THOR-ROI returned 45 cases and 12 nil returns<sup>1</sup>. The number of cases, nil returns and participating physicians for the quarter of Jan – March 2021, compared to the same quarter in 2020 are provided in Table 1.

**Table 1 Number of physicians, cases and nil returns reported by scheme Jan-March 2021 and Jan-March 2020**

	Jan – March 2021			Jan – March 2020*		
	Physicians	Cases	Nil returns	Physicians	Cases	Nil returns
<b>OPRA</b>	27	38	5	26	6	9
<b>EPIDERM</b>	12	1	6	13	6	5
<b>SWORD</b>	9	6	1	9	7	0
<b>THOR-GP</b>	20	0	0	20	0	2

\*Totals may have increased from previous reporting due to the submission of late cases.

## OVERVIEW OF CASES BY SCHEME

### OPRA-ROI

The 27 occupational physicians (OPs) currently reporting to OPRA-ROI returned 38 cases and 5 nil returns during the first quarter of 2021, taking the total number of cases returned by OPs since the scheme commenced in 2007 to 1976. Of the 38 cases reported to OPRA-ROI this quarter, 79% were female and the age range was 24 to 66 years (mean age = 45 years).

The 38 cases (42 diagnoses) reported this quarter comprised 19 'other' diseases, 8 musculoskeletal disorders, 7 mental ill-health problems, 7 respiratory diseases and 1 skin disease. No hearing loss cases were reported this quarter.

### Diagnostic sub-categories:

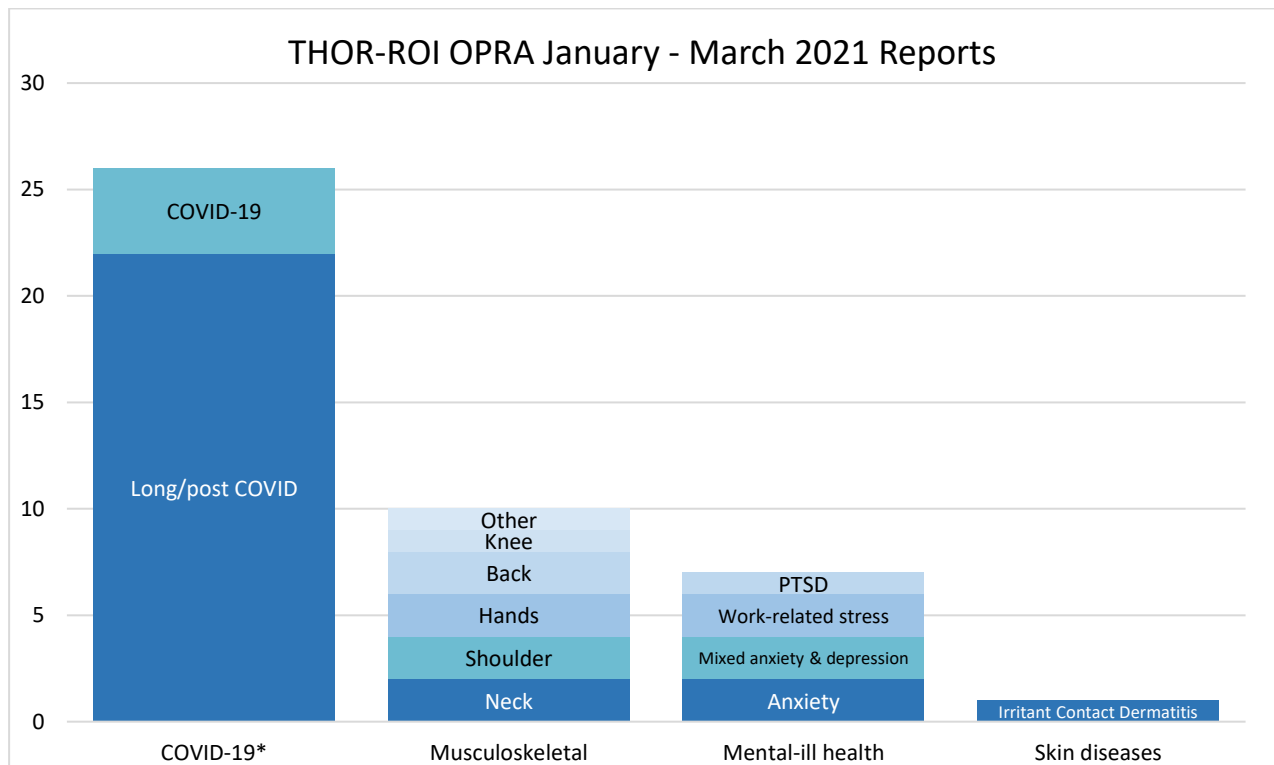
Figure 1 provides an overview of the cases reported this quarter by diagnostic sub-category:

- A total of 26 COVID-19 related cases were reported. Seven cases were reported by the OPs as "respiratory" cases, while the remaining 19 cases were reported under the "other" category. OPs can report COVID-19 cases under any category and it is up to them to decide which category to report it under. Of the 26 cases, 22 had long/post COVID diagnosis and 4 had a diagnosis of COVID-19 disease. Two physicians reported all 26 cases of COVID-19 and long/post COVID.
- The 8 musculoskeletal cases (10 diagnoses) were reported under the following anatomical sites: neck (2 diagnoses); shoulder (2 diagnoses); hands (2 diagnoses); back (2 diagnoses); knee (1 diagnosis) and chest (1 diagnosis).

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<sup>1</sup> nil return = a physician tells us that they did not see any cases of work-related ill-health in their reporting month

- The 7 mental ill-health cases were specified as follows: anxiety (2 diagnosis); anxiety & depression mixed (2 diagnoses); work-related stress (2 diagnoses) and post-traumatic stress disorder (1 diagnosis).
- The skin disease case was specified as irritant contact dermatitis (ICD) (1 diagnosis).



**Figure 1: Number of cases of work-related ill-health reported to OPRA-ROI by diagnostic sub-category (January-March 2021)**

*\*The reporting physician chooses which diagnosis category to report cases of COVID-19 under. In the quarter between January and March 2021, cases of COVID-19 were reported under both the respiratory and 'other' diagnostic categories.*

### Industry and occupation:

All cases reported were from the health and social care sector, and the occupations reported were mainly nurses 42% (16 cases) or nursing assistants 26% (10 cases). Other occupations reported were, hospital and health service managers (2 cases), medical practitioners (2 cases), hospital porters (2 cases), social science researchers, medical radiographers, filing and other records assistants/clerks, general office assistants/clerks, care assistants and home carers, and domestic cleaners (1 case in each category).

### Suspected agents / precipitating events / tasks and movements:

The most frequently reported event for cases with a work-related mental ill-health diagnosis this quarter was factors intrinsic to workload (3 cases). Other reported events were risk from environmental factors, reported as exposure to SARS-COV-2 virus (2 cases), organisational factors (1 case), interpersonal relationships (1 case), interpersonal difficulties with other workers (1 case), and violence at work/verbal abuse/sexual assault (1 case).

For the musculoskeletal disorders, the associated tasks included materials manipulation (5 cases), heavy lifting (2 cases), accidents (2 cases), and for one case there was no task recorded. The associated movements included materials handling (7 cases), accidents (2 cases), and for one case there was no movement recorded.

The suspected agent for all work-related respiratory (7 cases) and 'other' diseases (19 cases) was SARS-COV-2 virus.

The suspected agent for the work-related skin case was alcohol gel under glove occlusion (1 case).

## **EPIDERM-ROI**

Only 1 case of work-related skin disease was reported to EPIDERM-ROI and 6 nil returns for the first quarter of 2021 (total ever cases = 535).

The case was reported as allergic contact dermatitis in a 29 year old female delicatessen worker in the catering industry. The suspected agents were reported as rubber, garlic and MI/MCI (possibly in soaps).

## **SWORD-ROI**

6 cases of work-related respiratory disease were reported to SWORD-ROI in the first quarter of 2021 (total cases ever reported = 258). All cases were reported in males with a mean age of 68 years (range 38-80 years).

The 6 cases (7 diagnoses) reported to SWORD-ROI this quarter were reported under the following categories:

- Silicosis in a foundry worker attributed to silica.
- Occupational bronchitis in a carpenter attributed to MDF.
- Non-malignant pleural disease (predominantly plaques) and pneumoconiosis in an electrical engineer attributed to asbestos.
- Lung cancer in a fitter in the manufacturing industry attributed to asbestos exposure.
- Non-malignant pleural disease (predominantly diffuse) in a general operative in the manufacturing industry attributed to asbestos exposure.
- Mesothelioma in a general operative in the manufacturing industry attributed to asbestos.

Half of the cases reported were in the "other" manufacturing industry (3/6), two cases were from the construction industry and the final case was from the metal manufacturing industry.

## **THOR-GP-ROI**

No cases of work-related ill-health were reported to THOR-GP-ROI in the first quarter of 2021.

## **NEWS**

After a brief break from our seminar series in June, we returned in July with a seminar from Dr Johanna Feary who talked about Asthma mimics; how to spot them in the occupational lung disease clinic. The next seminar will be on 24 August (at 4 pm) by our very own Prof Martie van Tongeren who will talk about his research on work-related risk factors of COVID-19. If you would like to catch up on any of our previous seminars you can do so by logging into the THOR website as described below. The recordings will be available here to watch for the foreseeable future.

We would like to continue to strongly encourage reporters to report electronically via a web form. To access the web form please click the link for your relevant scheme:

[SWORD-ROI](#)  
[EPIDERM-ROI](#)  
[OPRA-ROI](#)  
[THOR-GP-ROI](#)

You will need a username (which is made up of the scheme name and your centre number) and password (which is made up of three letters, two numbers then three letters e.g. abc12def) to access the web form. Please feel free to contact us if you wish this information to be provided again. When reporting electronically, please remember to submit a nil return if you have nothing to report for the month.

Please follow us to keep up to date with the latest news from the network. Our dedicated THOR Twitter is [@THOR\\_UoM](#), alternatively you can follow us on the Centre for Occupational and Environmental Health Twitter; [@UoM\\_COEH](#).

Many thanks for your continued support to THOR-ROI. Please feel free to contact us (see Table 2 for contact details) if you have any queries regarding the reporting process.

## REMINDER OF HOW WE CAN HELP YOU

Please let us know if you have any questions in relation to the data presented in this quarterly report or any other related matter. In addition, we would welcome any comments or suggestions in relation to recruitment of new physicians and improvements for presenting our data. We are very keen to collaborate with anyone who is interested in using the THOR-ROI or THOR-UK data to investigate a particular area of interest. Furthermore, please let us know if you would like to present THOR-ROI or THOR-UK data at any future meetings; simply email [ireny.iskandar@manchester.ac.uk](mailto:ireny.iskandar@manchester.ac.uk).

## THOR CONTACTS

Table 2 provides contact details for the THOR team. Please feel free to contact us if you have any queries.

**Table 2 THOR-ROI Contact details**

SCHEME	email
EPIDERM-ROI / SWORD-ROI	<a href="mailto:laura.byrne@manchester.ac.uk">laura.byrne@manchester.ac.uk</a>
OPRA-ROI / THOR- GP-ROI	<a href="mailto:susan.taylor@manchester.ac.uk">susan.taylor@manchester.ac.uk</a>
DATA REQUESTS / GENERAL ENQUIRIES	<a href="mailto:ireny.iskandar@manchester.ac.uk">ireny.iskandar@manchester.ac.uk</a> <a href="mailto:sarah.daniels@manchester.ac.uk">sarah.daniels@manchester.ac.uk</a> <a href="mailto:kim.fowler@manchester.ac.uk">kim.fowler@manchester.ac.uk</a>