



This series provides insight into the careers of retired and actively serving occupational physicians. The interview series has supported a collaboration amongst our peers in developing projects on compiling the history of occupational medicine. On this occasion, I had the pleasure of meeting Dr Armand Casolin.

Dr Farhan Shahzad, Consultant Occupational and Environmental Medicine, Sydney

Farhan: Welcome Dr Casolin, please tell us about your personal and professional life. Please tell us a bit about yourself including your training and how you ended up in occupational medicine.

Armand: When I left the hospital system in 1995, I wanted to be involved in managing a variety of medical problems, as opposed to just specializing in one system, and work in corporate or industrial settings. I began working in occupational medicine, at what used to be the Australian Government Health Service, and quickly realized that occupational medicine was the specialty for me.

Farhan: Tell us about your journey in Occupational Medicine.

Armand: I started at the Australian Government Health Service where I did occupational medical assessments but also other work like immigration and social security medicals. After several years, when I was about halfway through the training program, I started a new role as Deputy Medical Director with the NSW Government occupational medicine service. They had a different client base and the work was 100% occupational medicine. It was a good learning experience being exposed to a wide variety of problems and industries and I stayed on for about 5 years until I graduated.

After the Waterfall crash, RailCorp advertised for Chief Health Officer and I was fortunate to move into this new role, which meant that I could work inside the industry rather than consulting from outside. You can achieve more preventative goals from the inside and affect change and the work is varied and interesting.

I've enjoyed working in rail for these reasons and we actually do more than just operate trains as we also have a large construction business. Additionally I'm now not just responsible for trains, but also buses, roads, ferries, light rail and maritime. There's a lot to keep me busy.

Farhan: What have been some of the highlights or interesting experiences of your career?

Armand: Highlights include the Q-fever vaccination program when I was still a trainee. I made that my Ramazzini - looking at the rates at which different occupations showed evidence of prior infection with Q-fever. I travelled to different parts of NSW as part of this program and learned a lot about the agricultural industry.

After starting at Railcorp, one of the first projects that I dealt with was the development of the Railway LED Lantern Test. At the time, the medical standard required practical testing for colour vision. Rather than have on-site practical tests, our intention was to create a simulation

that could be completed in a standard way. It was satisfying to see this project through and, ultimately, being written into the National Standard. It's made a difference to the way that people with a colour vision deficiency are assessed in the rail industry and standardised the whole process, which I think is a good thing.

More recently, I've had the opportunity to be involved with the Australasian Medical Review Officers Association (AMROA) and I consider it a privilege to be part of the organisation. It's given me the opportunity to meet many other fellows, as well as trainees and doctors from around Australia and NZ who might not be fellows, but who do a lot for occupational medicine.

Farhan: What else do you aspire to do in your career?

Armand: I'm also involved with the Faculty Training Committee and on the NSW Regional Committee. They are two things which have occupied my time in recent years and have been very satisfying. It was great to organise a training meeting when I was the Training Program Director in NSW. It has been very satisfying being Chair of the Faculty Training Committee and implementing changes that help improve our program and make it better for trainees and the faculty.

For the past two years the vast majority of my time has been taken up with COVID-related problems, particularly the COVID Task Force at Transport for NSW. I've been involved in a team that deals with employee communications, procedures and COVID safe practices. It's been a rewarding experience to work with such a great team and it led to me coming over to Transport for NSW as Chief Health Officer.

Farhan: What message do you have for our trainees and other fellows?

Armand: Keep your eyes out for opportunities. Make the most of opportunities that come your way and never turn down an offer, because that can lead to unexpected opportunities that might be really rewarding. The pandemic has been top of mind to everyone in Australia for 2 years and has highlighted the importance of public health. The public health physicians are all superstars. Occupational medicine is very similar to public health, just with a focus on the subset of the population who are workers, rather than the entire population. Just as the pandemic has made public health physicians crucial to the government and has highlighted their importance to the general public, it has also created opportunities for occupational physicians to sell our expertise to industry. It has changed the focus of our practice, opened up new opportunities for us and demonstrated the value that we can offer business.