



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 Brian Dare.

Dr Farhan Shahzad, Consultant Occupational and Environmental Medicine, Sydney

Farhan: Thanks for joining us. I have known you for years as colleague and as a mentor. Please tell us about yourself including your life, training and how you ended up in occupational medicine.

Brian: I'm from Adelaide originally so I completed my medical degree at Adelaide Uni in 1977 and did my internship at Royal Adelaide Hospital.

I did a couple of years of physician training but the thought of staying in hospitals for several more years made me realise that I really needed to get into something else. The trouble is, when you're in medicine, it's very 'insular' and you don't often know what's outside of the hospitals.

A training position came up in Medical Administration with the SA Health Department in 1981. What attracted me to that training position was that you'd get a study award to go to Sydney University to do a Master's in Public Health. So, I got the first Traineeship in Medical Administration although I didn't really know if I wanted to do Medical Administration, but just wanted to get out of the Hospitals.

In 1982, I went to Sydney University and did my Master's in Public Health (Occupational Health).

As I was tied to the SA Health Department there was a Medical Superintendent position at Port Augusta Hospital in a town 3 hours north of Adelaide which is where I spent a year in 1983.

I was then offered an occupational physician role with the SA Transport Authority in Adelaide which was a newly created role. I remained in the role for two years which was rather interesting and then a position came up in Perth in 1986.

This was for an occupational physician with WorkSafe WA. KC Wan was the Chief occupational physician at that time and I was "under his wing".

I worked under KC Wan for 4 years. It was a time when you provided a consultancy to not only Government workplaces, but also private. You weren't an inspector. It was a great position as you got to go to so many different worksites.

At the time a lot of the work involved medical surveillance, as well as dealing with asbestos in the workplace and with mesothelioma from the Wittenoom mine through the Pneumoconiosis Medical panel.

A position then came up at the Police Department. They'd never had an inhouse occupational physician. I did that full time for three years.

I eventually left my role with the Police department as an Occupational physician role came up at Royal Perth Hospital in 1993 where I remained for 10 years.

After leaving the public service in 2003, I got involved with independent medical examinations.

Farhan: Where do you see occupational medicine heading in Australasia? What would you want to do if you had more opportunity to do so?

Brian: Unfortunately, the consultancy work has reduced in Government and the private sector with the competition from the different disciplines now trained in Occupational health.

It becomes harder to remain at the head of the pack. You're having to balance between how much of your work is clinical, consultancy, advisory and managerial.

Farhan: What message do you have for trainees and fellow OPs?

Brian: Even though I've enjoyed doing independent medical examinations in the latter part of my career, I have been lucky to be able to be involved in a consultancy and advisory role, dealing with all parties in the workplace.

I consider it is important to get experience in all the different facets of Occupational health from clinical work, dealing with injuries, fitness for work, rehabilitation, as well as a consultancy and advisory role.