



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 Maggie Goldie.

Dr Farhan Shahzad, Consultant Occupational and Environmental Medicine, Sydney

Hi Maggie, could you please tell us about yourself, your personal life and training?

I was born in Glasgow during the Second World War and we moved to England when I was about 4½. Educated at Beckenham Grammar School about 12 miles out of London, and then studied medicine at the Middlesex Hospital, London.

When I was still in the UK, I worked through my residencies and then did 7½ years of anaesthetics before coming out to Australia in 1974. After coming to Australia, I had the opportunity of joining an occupational medicine practice in 1976 working with BP Refinery, Alcoa and Cockburn Cement in Kwinana near Perth WA.

It was a great introduction to occupational medicine, and I was very lucky to work with Dr Harley Percy, who was an early member of ANZSOM and the original college, going back to the early 1970's. He's not often talked about, but he was influential at that time and was one of the only occupational physicians in Western Australia.

In 1983 I began working with the old State Rail Authority in NSW. During the time with the railway, I had the opportunity to complete the 10-week course at Sydney University which was absolutely brilliant, and it expanded my knowledge and professional network. It was during that time that I started to get involved with ANZSOM.

In 1988 I joined Boral heading up occupational health and safety. It was a great experience, because we looked after international as well as national operations which led me to working within Asia, the US, the UK and Europe.

In 2001 I went to work for Tyco Fire and Security as the Manager for Health and Safety initially in Australia and then based in the USA for 3 years heading up the health and safety function for Fire and Security globally. After a major Tyco restructure, I returned to Australia to support the integration of health and safety management during the amalgamation of Australasia with Asia to form an Asia Pac division.

Although for the last 30 years I have focused on health and safety management and not clinical occupational medicine I've found my medical background is invaluable because you're taught how to analyse, to diagnose, and to pull things apart until you find a solution which is a great way to approach health and safety in an organisation.

You had an interesting career, what would you suggest to others in terms of career prospects?

I think a career like mine was a lot more common going back 20, 30 years, where a lot of organisations employed an occupational physician in a medical model that often encompassed overseeing the safety function as well. Throughout the 1990's organisations moved away from employing medically qualified professionals and tended to outsource occupational medicine services replacing the internal roles with other health and safety professionals.

Can you please talk on organisational approach to (mental) health and wellbeing in occupational medicine.

There's a huge drive within organisations to spend a lot more time looking at the wellbeing of their staff, focusing not just on their physical health and safety but managing the issues that cause stress in the workplace.

Organisations are realising that promoting mental health initiatives leads to healthier and happier staff who feel supported and appreciated. There is an opportunity for occupational physicians, to be able to step in and provide help and advice in that area.

What message do you have for Trainees and Fellow Occupational physicians?

I like to repeat what was said to me by Dr Bob Wilson, the occupational physician whom I replaced at Boral. I remember him saying "If somebody comes to me and asks me what I need to do to be a good occupational physician, I tell them to go out and work in the world. Go out and get a broad experience as a doctor in all sorts of different situations and then consider occupational medicine". You then bring your experience of life to the role which leads to you understanding where people come from and what makes them tick. Set out to get that experience, get embedded within organisations at least for a period of time, so that you can observe the workplace as it really is.