

BOHRF Occupational Asthma Guidelines win Award for Excellence

BOHRF has won the *BUPA Foundation Health at Work Award for Excellence in Occupational Medicine* for the second time. The 2005 award is for the “*Evidence based guidelines for the prevention, identification, and management of occupational asthma*”.

BUPA's Group Medical Director, Dr Andrew Vallance-Owen described the project as “a world first that tackles a major health problem in the workplace ... a forward-thinking, ground-breaking project that will offer hope to hundreds of workers and change their lives.” The award was received on behalf of BOHRF by Professor Tony Newman Taylor, Chairman of the Research Working Group, at the BUPA Foundation award dinner on 10 November at the Great Hall, Lincoln's Inn Fields, London.

The dinner showcased the work of the winners of six Foundation Award categories and was attended by approximately 250 guests including senior representatives of the Royal Colleges, medical and research organisations, charities, patient groups and, from BOHRF, Brian Kazer and the guidelines writing committee.

BOHRF evidence reviews produce guidelines of direct practical application at work. Practical examples from the occupational asthma review include; employers should provide health surveillance (respiratory questionnaire with additional functional and immunological tests, where appropriate) to workers where a risk of occupational asthma is identified; surveillance should be performed at least annually and more frequently in the first two years of exposure and in workers who develop occupational rhinitis. The latter recommendation is supported by evidence that, for most causes, the risk of developing occupational asthma is greatest during the early years of exposure; and that occupational rhinitis often precedes IgE-antibody associated occupational asthma, typically by up to one year.

Another key recommendation is that health practitioners should be aware that the prognosis of occupational asthma is improved by early identification and early avoidance of further exposure to its cause. A recommendation supported by the strongest of evidence is that health practitioners should enquire of any adult patient with new, recurrent or deteriorating symptoms of rhinitis or asthma about their job, the materials with which they work and whether their symptoms improve regularly when away from work.

The full guidelines are online at: <http://oem.bmjournals.com/cgi/content/full/62/5/290>

BOHRF first received the Health at Work Award in 2000, for developing the UK's first guidelines for the prevention and treatment of low back pain at work. You can read about other BOHRF projects and its work at www.bohrf.org.uk

It is the second BUPA Award too for one of the writing team, Professor Sherwood Burge, who won the award in 1999 for developing the computer-assisted diagnostic aid for the diagnosis of occupational asthma, OASYS. Information about OASYS is at www.occupationalasthma.com

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