



# FACULTY OF OCCUPATIONAL MEDICINE

ROYAL COLLEGE OF  
PHYSICIANS OF IRELAND



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OF IRELAND

# ADVOCATING FOR THE VALUE OF OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH IN IRELAND

## STRATEGY 2023-2026

### A Call to Action

The strategic position of the Faculty of Occupational Medicine regarding plans to conduct and support advocacy for Occupational Health in Ireland; setting out a clear framework and call to action for our members and relevant stakeholders across Ireland and beyond.

#### **Faculty of Occupational Medicine**

Royal College of Physicians of Ireland, Dublin

November 2022

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**Aim of the strategy:** Actively promote what Occupational Health (OH) is and its importance and relevance at the individual, organisational and wider societal level in Ireland.

**The state of work in Irish society is changing dramatically, constantly evolving, while remaining crucial:**

- Good work and good health are interrelated and valuable to individuals, organisations, and society
- Global shifts such as the climate crisis, rapid technological advances, emerging novel public health risks, an increase in transient and precarious employment, and an aging workforce all pose a challenge in the workplace and may require new OH solutions

**There is evidence of the wide-ranging value of OH and given the changing world of work we need new focus:**

- Supporting individuals' health and ability to work elevates their business and social contribution. OH can help:
  - people support themselves, increasing their earning capacity, dignity, self-esteem, and lifespan
  - businesses improve productivity, decrease medical costs, and improve their corporate image
  - society benefit from local competitiveness, improved public health, and reduced inequalities
- OH is a valuable differentiating service supporting physical and mental health, attracting top candidates, and supporting employee recruitment, engagement and retention
- Uniquely trained and accredited professionals deliver quality evidence-based medical and

psychosocial support for employee health and wellbeing and organisational effectiveness

- The recent COVID-19 pandemic illuminated the need for and value of OH support for wellbeing as well as health

**We must act now to support OH in Ireland so that it can adapt alongside ongoing changes:**

- Work-related ill health remains a significant burden for individuals, employers, state, and society
  - 13,252 non-fatal work accidents were recorded in Ireland in 2019
  - 20% of workers took paid sick leave in 2021
  - Workers who are part-time or work for SMEs are more likely to take unpaid sick leave
- Evolving models of work require advanced OH approaches and re-evaluation of statutory and organisational support for workers
  - There are rising levels of full and part-time work in Ireland, leading to a labour shortage, with more women and people with long-term health conditions and disabilities in part-time work
  - 2/3 of employees work for SMEs which generate 37% of Ireland's GVA
  - RCPI FOM OH professionals are uniquely trained to understand the workplace at both individual and organisational level and to advocate for healthy work for all

## THE FOM ADVOCACY STRATEGY

Objective	Strategic Actions
Recognition of timely need to evaluate current provision and future needs for OH in Ireland in order to support evidence-based, accredited quality OH practitioners and services	Identify relevant, timely topics and platforms for each stakeholder
	Form / strengthen connections with stakeholders to trigger timely engagement to build, advocate for, and evaluate a joint plan to design and deliver world class OH services throughout Ireland
Increased awareness of full OH offering and value to individuals, organisations and society	Engage with stakeholders to advocate for the value of OH
	Communicate the value of OH as career to students and allied professionals, and as a service for organisations and individuals
Increased FOM representation in OH advocacy	Seek representation on key groups
	Empower and enable members to advocate on behalf of FOM
Action towards universal OH access	Produce evidence base of need for and approach to universal access
	Engage with stakeholders to build, act on and evaluate framework for increased access to OH

We will create the FOM infrastructure to support advocacy, initiate engagement with key stakeholders and work with them to build on this strategy over time, creating an implementation plan setting out how commitment and support will be obtained and what systems and actions are needed to effect and evaluate the necessary changes.

**We call upon others to join us in specific strategic action to:**

- Generate evidence, drive awareness, and advocate for the value of OH in Ireland
- Encourage accreditation of practitioners, and assimilation of evidence-based practices
- Advocate for policy and legislative enhancements towards universal access to Occupational Health

**Key Recommendations of the FOM Advocacy Strategy**

Short term	
FOM Readiness	Engage
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish Faculty OH Advocacy Committee</li> <li>• Identify advocacy topics, considering internal and external drivers of timing and priority</li> <li>• Appoint representatives to engage with stakeholders</li> <li>• Develop communications plan with RCPI across Faculties and Institute</li> <li>• Empower members to advocate</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engage regularly with FOM membership</li> <li>• Conduct initial 1-2-1 engagements with priority stakeholders</li> <li>• Set up cross-specialty OH Advocacy Forum</li> <li>• Communicate on own channels and support stakeholders to communicate on theirs</li> </ul>
Long term	
Build	Drive Change
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote that doctors who practice OH should hold a suitable qualification and affiliate with the FOM</li> <li>• Compile current evidence of need for and value of access to OH</li> <li>• Commission primary research on OH barriers, best practice and valuable outcomes</li> <li>• Plan design and delivery of world class OH services</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Act on ongoing plan</li> <li>• Encourage appointment of Chief Occupational Health Officer in government</li> <li>• Work with government, allied agencies, employer organisations and businesses to promote and deliver wider access to world class OH services</li> </ul>

*“Advocacy for Occupational Health plays a key role in ensuring that workers everywhere have the opportunity to enjoy the benefits it offers to their work, personal health, quality of life and the communities they live in. Whilst exposure to various occupational hazards can be inevitable in most types of work, Occupational Health is the discipline that protects workers from occupational risks and promotes their health and wellbeing. Also, access to Occupational Health, which is part of the security of a person, is regarded as one of the fundamental human rights along with the right to life and liberty.”*

**Professor Seong-Kyu Kang**  
President, International Commission on Occupational Health, Milan, Italy

*“The value of occupational medicine to support workplaces and employees is clear - this advocacy strategy is an impressive start in articulating the process by which investment and recognition can be put in place.”*

**Nick Pahl**  
Chief Executive Officer, Society of Occupational Medicine, UK



# CONTENTS OF THIS OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH ADVOCACY STRATEGY

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## THE CONCEPT OF ADVOCACY

Acting as an advocate for a topic or issue can occur at an individual and/or organisational level. The concept of a health professional (medical, nursing and allied groups) advocating on behalf of their patient is already familiar to those in professional practice. This Faculty initiative considers advocating for Occupational Health as being lead and driven at the organisational level.

Advocacy can be seen as a broad set of activities organised to influence a wide range of relevant influential groups (such as policy makers) to design, adopt, implement or change policies and practices. It involves engaging in a series of activities designed to influence decision-makers. In healthcare settings,

purposeful actions by health professionals can be used to address determinants of health which negatively impact individuals and communities. This can be achieved by engaging with those who can enact change by initiating, mobilising, and organising activities to make change happen, with or on behalf of the individuals or communities with whom health professionals work. Most commonly advocacy will include the important elements of: campaigning, educating, informing and lobbying. It is usually regarded as a long-term process requiring a systematic, well-planned approach. [5-8]

## KEY TERMS AND ACRONYMS USED IN THIS DOCUMENT

<b>EU</b>	European Union	<b>ILO</b>	International Labour Organisation
<b>DALY</b>	Disability-Adjusted Life Year	<b>OH</b>	Occupational Health
<b>FOM</b>	Faculty of Occupational Medicine	<b>OHS</b>	Occupational Health Services
<b>GDP</b>	Gross Domestic Product	<b>RCPI</b>	Royal College of Physicians of Ireland
<b>GVA</b>	Gross Value Added	<b>SME</b>	Small and Medium-sized Enterprises
<b>HSE</b>	Health Service Executive	<b>WHO</b>	World Health Organisation

# OUR COMMITMENT TO ADVOCATING FOR OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH IN IRELAND

## OUR MISSION

The Faculty of Occupational Medicine (RCPI) will actively promote Occupational Health in Ireland and through key stakeholder engagement we will emphasise the crucial role, and value it has to offer in facilitating positive worker health and wellbeing at the individual, organisational and wider societal levels.



*The role of Occupational Health has been brought into sharp focus by the recent pandemic, during which Occupational Health professionals have provided much-needed specialist advice to employers, workers and governments which has assisted with the effective management of the crisis.*

*Occupational Health professionals are uniquely qualified to navigate the future of work in Ireland, ensuring the workers and the organisations they represent can reach their full potential. We are aware that employers and employee representative groups are working keenly towards improved diversity, equity and inclusion – Occupational Health services have a vital role to play.*

*Evolving medical and legal frameworks, and an emerging culture of human purpose and health equity, require joint representation of organisations and their staff to deliver quality evidence-based support. This is why we are advocating for Occupational Health, towards universal access across Ireland.*

*The Faculty of Occupational Medicine is an integral part of the RCPI and as President I congratulate the Faculty on this strategy which the College fully supports.*

### Royal College of Physicians of Ireland

Professor Mary Horgan, President



*The recognition and understanding of Occupational Health have improved greatly over recent years, especially following the recent Covid-19 pandemic. However, as a Faculty we need to continue to proactively advocate for the specialty. This will involve engaging with our stakeholders and explaining the role, relevance and value proposition that comes with high quality Occupational Health services and the benefits of promoting good Occupational Health within workplaces. An added imperative to do so comes with the global shifts that are taking place within our environment, our society and our places of employment. In my view, given these challenges, the relevance and value of our contribution as Occupational Health practitioners will inevitably increase in the years ahead, be that at an individual, organisational, or societal level. We must be ready to meet those challenges.*

*Advocacy for Occupational Health is both central to our good governance [1] and also complies with the Faculty's Model of Care 2021 [2]. In addition, it aligns with the College's Strategic Plan 2021-24 [3], where promoting the voice of physicians who shape and influence healthcare policy at a national level is seen as essential. Our members have given strong support for: the development of the advocacy strategy; promoting the value of good Occupational Health services; maintaining health and wellbeing at work; and, promoting the health benefits of good work [4]. This document sets out the Faculty's approach to advocacy over the next three years. We are committed to developing supportive infrastructure and engaging with key stakeholders to create an effective, measurable implementation plan, taking immediate action and planning longer-term collaborative activities including research, communication and partnership working.*

*Finally, in launching this strategy we call to action our members and all other stakeholders responsible for the health and wellbeing of our modern workforce to join us in advocating for Occupational Health in Ireland.*

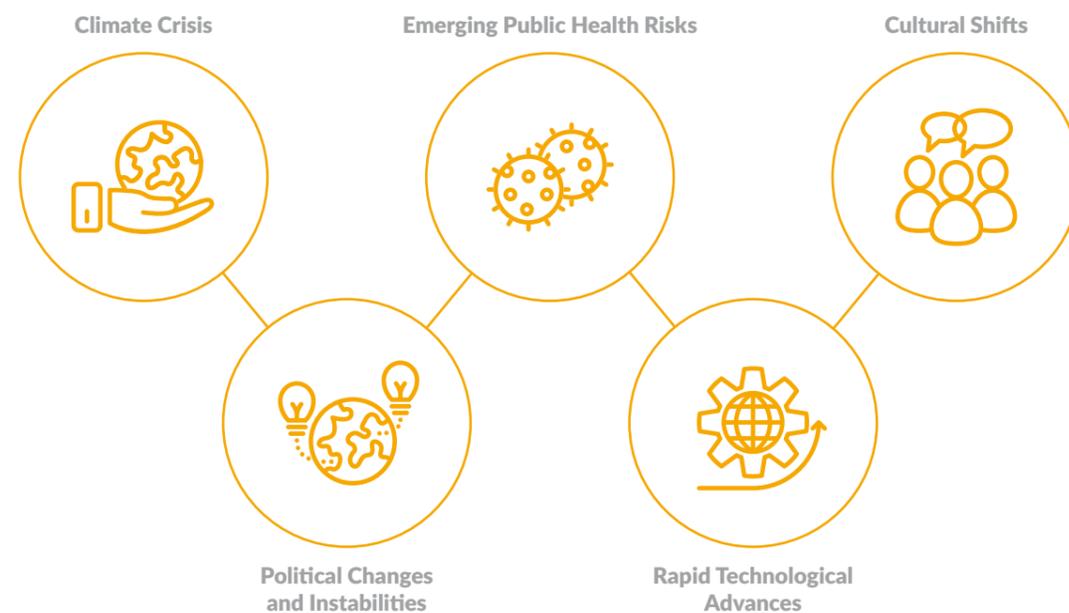
### Faculty of Occupational Medicine

Dr Robert Ryan, Dean

## THE CHANGING STATE OF WORK IN IRELAND

The state of work in Irish society is changing dramatically, constantly evolving, while remaining crucial. Good work and good health are interrelated and valuable to individuals, organisations, and society. The nature of work is changing.

### MULTIPLE GLOBAL FORCES ARE CHANGING THE WORLD OF WORK



### TRENDS IN WORK INCLUDE:

- **Multigeneration & aging workforce**
  - Diverse cultural influences on workers
  - Rising pension / retirement age
  - Increasing impact of chronic illness
- **Digital systems & remote working**
  - increased automation
  - rising sedentary screen time
  - isolation, lack of socialisation, demotivation
  - blurring of boundaries between work and home
  - hybrid working
- **Evolving contracting models, increasing transient and precarious employment**
  - Gig economy
  - Short-term and zero-hours contracts
  - Entrepreneurial economy
  - Part-time work

- **Rising workplace stress**
- **Staff shortages, turnover & increasing competition for emerging talent**
- **Increasing acceptance of desire for enriched fulfilling purposeful lives**

These trends all pose a challenge in the workplace and have implications for Occupational Health, and thus wellbeing of individuals and effectiveness of organisations and businesses. Evolving models of work require re-evaluation of statutory and organisational support for workers. There is increased public policy profile with publication of the Department of Health/ Healthy Ireland Workplace Wellbeing Framework. Yet there is a general lack of awareness of the full Occupational Health offering and its value to individuals, organisations, and society.

## THERE IS CLEAR EVIDENCE TO SUPPORT THE WIDE-REACHING VALUE OF OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH BUT GIVEN THE CHANGING WORLD OF WORK WE NEED NEW FOCUS

Supporting individuals' health and their ability to work elevates business and the social contributions of employees and organisations. The new working world requires new Occupational Health approaches. Occupational Health helps people support themselves, increasing their earning capacity, dignity, self-esteem and lifespan. And it has benefits beyond the individual across sectors. Globally it is recognised that businesses

reap benefits including improved productivity, decreased absenteeism and medical costs, positive brand profile and improved corporate image, improved recruitment and retention. This is in addition to societal benefits from local work and business competitiveness, an improved public health profile, and reduced inequalities.[9,10]

### KEY BENEFITS PROVIDED BY OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH SERVICES



Adapted from Occupational Health: The Value Proposition. Soc Occ Med. March 2022. [11]

#### Defining Occupational Health

The joint ILO and WHO Committee on Occupational Health describes the aims of Occupational Health as 'the promotion and maintenance of the highest degree of physical, mental and social well-being of workers in all occupations' and the WHO Strategy on Occupational Health for All states that 'access to Occupational Health services should be ensured for all workers of the world'. The ILO this year added safety and health as a fundamental right at work, and the Society of Occupational Medicine in the UK has a position on universal access. [12-18]

Occupational Health Services include: prevention of ill health; timely intervention for the main causes of sickness absence; rehabilitation; health assessments to help manage attendance, retirement; assessment of fitness for (safety critical) work; promotion of health and well-being; teaching and training; advisory for company set-ups, policy and legislative compliance, providing expert advice in legal proceedings.

#### Models of care in Ireland are predominantly one of the below, or a hybrid:

- **In-company** – the Occupational Physician is an employee or contracted to the organisation, usually based on the premises
- **Private health centre** – care delivered by a group of Occupational Physicians or private organisation, often in separate private premises
- **Primary health care units** – occupational medical care provided by a General Practitioner in their practice or on company premises

These OH services will involve a range of health professionals including OH nurses, physiotherapists, counsellors and others and in the future may include hybrid in-person and remote digital services.

Occupational Health is a valuable differentiating service supporting physical and mental health, helping employers recruit and retain the best job applicants and promote employee engagement.

Uniquely trained and accredited professionals deliver quality evidence-based support for employee health and wellbeing and organisational effectiveness. Because trends in work and emerging evidence point to an increasing need for Occupational Health support, organisations should act to ensure they have high-quality evidence-based support from accredited Occupational Health professionals.

## THE TIMELY IMPERATIVE TO SUPPORT OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH IN IRELAND

We must act now to support Occupational Health in Ireland so that it can anticipate and adapt alongside continual changes. Work-related ill-health remains a significant burden on individuals, employers, state, and society in the EU and Ireland.

**7.1 MILLION DALY**

**ARE LOST IN THE EU AS A RESULT OF WORK-RELATED INJURY AND ILLNESS [19]**

- 13,252 non-fatal work accidents were recorded in Ireland in 2019. [21] The European Agency for Safety and Health at Work estimates that the main work-related illnesses in Ireland were cancer (848), injuries (837), circulatory disorders (445), and musculoskeletal disorders (425) [22]
- In 2020, the Health and Occupation Research network in Ireland reported multiple work-related cases of contact dermatitis, musculoskeletal disease, asthma and mental illness, with health & social care as the most common sector of incidence, but also including sectors as diverse as beauty/hairstyling, construction, manufacturing, trade, agriculture and administration [23]

### The European Working Condition Survey (2015) showed the experience in Ireland: [24]

- 41% of employees were absent for 1-15 days of work over the past 12 months
- 52% of employees stated that they worked while sick over the previous 12 months
- 19% of employees stated that they did not feel they would be able to do their current job or a similar one until they are 60 years of age
- 21% of Irish employees felt that their health or safety was at risk because of their work

In most European countries, work-related cancer accounts for the majority of costs (**€119.5 BILLION OR 0.8% OF THE EU'S GDP**), with musculoskeletal disorders being the second largest contributor [20]

### A Central Statistics Office survey on work-life balance about leave taken in 2021 revealed unequal sick leave absenteeism (and therefore likely presenteeism): [25]

- 20.6% workers took paid sick leave and 6.3% took sick leave without pay in the last 12 months
- Full-time employees of smaller organisations took less paid sick leave than those in larger organisations
- Part-time workers, particularly those in small organisations and those with less than 5 years' service, took less paid sick leave than equivalent full-time staff
- Part time workers were also more likely to take unpaid sick leave than full-time staff

### Evolving models of work require improved OH services with universal access in Ireland

- There are rising levels of full and part-time work in Ireland, with more women than men in part-time work; particular rise in information, communications, professional, scientific and technical sectors (2019-2021) [26]
- 2/3 of employees work for SMEs which generate 37% of GVA to the business economy (2019) [27]
- Labour shortage is seen as key barrier to future growth, raising competitiveness challenges [27]
- More people with than without disabilities work part time [27]
- Return-to-work and access-to-work roles of Occupational Health therefore highly valuable [27]

## PERCENTAGE OF IRISH PERSONS ENGAGED BY SIZE OF ENTERPRISE



Adapted from Business in Ireland 2019. Central Statistics Office 2021. [28]

### Engaging a qualified professional contributes to Occupational Health advocacy and value

Corporations are increasingly offering wellness perks through Human Resources departments. Engaging an Occupational Health professional could help ensure the offering is evidence-based, and supplemented with valuable medical and psychosocial services. FOM professionals are uniquely trained to understand the workplace at both individual and organisational level and to advocate for healthy work for all.

*“Occupational Health services have always been a valuable service to Irish employers – from pre-employment medicals to health surveillance, Occupational Health (OH) has been an integral part of working life for many organisations. However, the emergence of the Covid-19 pandemic in early 2020, illuminated the need for, and value of, OH in supporting the health and wellbeing of both employees and employers. The work of Occupational Health reached a much wider audience over the past two years and it is important the benefits are maintained.*

*Now, more than ever, supporting the health and wellbeing of the employees in Ireland with evidence-based robust medical and psychosocial services has become important. Our economic stability and societal fulfilment depends on ability as an open economy to adapt quickly.*

*The world of work is changing and constantly evolving but ensuring the health and wellbeing of Irish employees remains crucial to the continued success of Irish businesses. Good work and good health are closely interconnected and is valuable to individuals, organisations, and society.*

*Ibec is happy to support the work of the Faculty of Occupational Medicine, RCPI, as it continues to raise awareness of and promote the discipline of Occupational Health for the benefit of Irish employees, Irish businesses and Irish society.”*

#### Danny McCoy

Chief Executive Officer, Ibec, Ireland

*“We put huge importance on Occupational Health and wellbeing in the HSE. The world of work has been transformed throughout Covid, putting many added pressures on healthcare staff in particular but also presenting opportunities to improve employee wellbeing. The HSE has a dedicated program of physical and emotional wellbeing support as well Occupational Health services including assessments and rehabilitation. Our staff are hugely dedicated to providing good care for our patients and all who use our services. We want to provide them with the best of support to help them to do this well.”*

#### Paul Reid

Chief Executive Officer, Health Service Executive, Ireland

# THE FOM OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH ADVOCACY STRATEGY

## The Faculty of Occupational Medicine Strategy for Occupational Health Advocacy

The aim of the strategy is to actively promote what Occupational Health is and its importance and relevance at the individual, organisational and wider societal level in Ireland. The strategy will be built upon over time to set out how commitment and support will be obtained from all relevant stakeholders and what systems and actions are needed to effect the necessary changes to deliver the aim. The value proposition for Occupational Health has been at the core of the development of the strategy, messaging and deliverables.

### Issues and opportunities

Through desk research conducted by our FOM Specialist Registrars, input from members via survey, [4] and the efforts of our Advocacy Subgroup, the Faculty identified key issues and opportunities for Occupational Health advocacy, which set the objectives for this strategy.

Issues	Opportunities	Objectives
Global shifts (such as climate, technology, pandemic, transient employment) are having local impact on work and wellbeing	> Evolving models of work require re-evaluation of statutory and organisational support for workers	Recognition of timely need for OH evaluation
Growing corporate and social focus on wellness vs health & safety will require OH evolution	> Recent COVID-19 pandemic illuminated need for, and value of OH for wellbeing as well as for health	Increased awareness of OH value
Lack of awareness of full OH offering and value to individuals, organisations, and society	> Recognition of need to promote evidence-based, accredited quality OH practitioners and services	Increased FOM representation in OH advocacy
Work-related ill health remains a significant burden for individuals, employers, state and society	> Improved access to work is valuable on all levels and requires universal access to quality OH services	Action towards universal OH access

### Strategic actions and potential activities to address advocacy objectives

The subgroup identified the below strategic actions in order to work towards the objectives. They also proposed potential activities that could be undertaken in order to effectively advocate for Occupational Health in Ireland. The next phase of work in 2023 will include prioritisation and time-planning of these activities, as well as engagement of other stakeholders to work together on delivery.

Objective	Strategic Actions	Potential Activities
Recognition of timely need for to evaluate current provision and future needs for OH in Ireland in order to support evidence-based, accredited quality OH practitioners and services	Identify relevant, timely topics and platforms for each OH stakeholder	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Research and express relevant topics and platforms</li> <li>Build into communications and engagement plans</li> <li>Identify advocacy topics, considering internal and external drivers of timing and priority</li> </ul>
	Form / strengthen connections with key stakeholders to trigger engagement to build and evaluate a joint plan to design and deliver world class OH services throughout Ireland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Partner with RCPI advocacy and communications teams</li> <li>Prioritise key stakeholders for effective advocacy and action</li> <li>Communicate through relevant channels</li> <li>Hold initial conversations with key contacts to determine joint objectives for advocacy and action</li> <li>Collaborate across RCPI Faculties and Institute</li> </ul>

Objective	Strategic Actions	Potential Activities
Increased awareness of full OH offering and value to individuals, organisations and society	Engage with stakeholders to advocate for the value of OH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Host multi-stakeholder meeting</li> <li>Conduct 1-2-1 engagements</li> <li>Attend key events</li> <li>Set up an OH Forum with specific role definitions for relevant partners e.g Health &amp; Safety, OH nurses, Occ Hygienists, Occ Toxicology, Physiotherapists, OH mental health - to advocate on a cross-specialty basis</li> </ul>
	Communicate the value of OH as career to students and allied professionals, and as a service for organisations and individuals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Launch Advocacy strategy</li> <li>Employ advocate communicator to share messaging on channels relevant to stakeholders, tied to relevant opportunities over time</li> <li>Improve FOM website &amp; social media</li> <li>Develop a framework to outline the value and benefits of a career in OH working in partnership with OH nursing and other relevant specialties</li> <li>Collaborate on an RCPI-wide position paper on the importance of Occupational Health</li> </ul>
Increased FOM representation in OH advocacy	Seek representation on key groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Scan for opportunities</li> <li>Engage with relevant stakeholders</li> <li>Encourage Government to appoint Chief Occupational Health Officer</li> </ul>
	Empower members to advocate on behalf of FOM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Advocacy as a standing committee of the Faculty Board and Appoint Faculty Advocacy Lead as chair – Terms of Reference to be agreed</li> <li>Committee to work with stakeholders to develop implementation plan, and in partnership with college, the communications plan</li> <li>Promote that doctors who practice OH should hold a suitable qualification and affiliate with the FOM</li> <li>Share FOM advocacy approaches and messages with members</li> <li>Connect members to relevant opportunities to advocate</li> <li>Encourage members and OH teams/practices to put themselves forward for various healthcare awards</li> <li>Appoint voluntary OH ambassadors to medical schools</li> <li>Engage with membership on a regular basis (annual or biennial) through a membership survey</li> </ul>
Action towards universal OH access	Produce evidence base of need for and approach to universal access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Compile existing evidence and identify gaps</li> <li>Fund a part-time Chair in OH in one of Ireland's third level institutions with a brief for research that would support our advocacy approach</li> <li>Commission primary research on OH services within Ireland and identify good practice and barriers to access</li> <li>Encourage accreditation of OH services</li> </ul>
	Engage with stakeholders to build, act on and evaluate framework for increased access to OH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Appoint FOM representative to engage with government and allied agencies to build framework for increased access to OH</li> <li>Appoint FOM representative to engage with employer organisations and businesses to promote benefits of OH and promote wider access to such services</li> <li>Work with government, allied agencies, employer organisations and businesses to promote and deliver wider access to world class OH services</li> </ul>

### Assessing implementation and measuring impact of Occupational Health advocacy

Looking towards the implementation of the strategy, and with a determination to ensure that our Advocacy has positive outcomes, the subgroup proposes a framework for measurement of the strategy below. The intention is that the next phase of work to implement the strategy in 2023 will include identifying SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Time-bound) performance indicators within this framework to enable the Faculty and their advocacy partners to assess the advocacy strategy and progress towards achieving objectives towards universal access to Occupational Health in Ireland.

### Proposed advocacy strategy measurement framework containing example indicators

FOM Actions (operational)	Reach (of communications)	Stakeholder Engagement (response, interaction, advocacy, action)	External Impact (Outcomes)
Launch strategy at AGM in November	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All members receive strategy document</li> <li>Number of members present at launch</li> </ul>	Positive response of members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>RCPI communicates support for strategy externally</li> </ul>
Appoint: advocacy lead, voluntary representatives			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Agreed outcomes of responsible</li> </ul>
Hold [number] stakeholder meetings	Number of members of stakeholder group reached with communications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of responses</li> <li>Tone of responses</li> <li>Communications made by stakeholders</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Actions taken by stakeholders</li> </ul>

### The operational steps that were set and taken by the FOM Board and advocacy subgroup in 2022 were:

- Form an advocacy Subgroup of the Faculty Board with a Chair in order to develop this strategy
- Engage with FOM membership on advocacy through a survey
- Engage an external consultant to assist with the development of the advocacy strategy
- Carry out desk research on employment trends in Ireland, work illness and injury in Ireland, OH value proposition, key stakeholders and their relevant priorities and areas of interest
- Compile this FOM Occupational Health advocacy strategy
- Launch the Strategy at the AGM in November

*“Preventative action and the promotion of the physical, mental and social health and well-being of workers is more important than ever. It requires a shared multi-disciplinary approach across several disciplines such as occupational medicine, ergonomics, psychology and occupational hygiene. It also requires commitment and focus by employers, regulators and medical professionals. The Health and Safety Authority is contributing to this focus by establishing a new division on Occupational Health to deliver our strategic and regulatory priorities over the coming years. We look forward to partnering with colleagues in occupational medicine so that together with employers we can protect the health and well-being of Irish workers now and in the future.”*

#### Sharon McGuinness

Chief Executive Officer, The Health and Safety Authority

*“Employee access to Occupational Health services in Ireland and in the UK has always lagged behind other northern European countries. Lack of access is accompanied at many levels by lack of awareness of the role and the value of Occupational Health and how it can benefit workers, employers and the public purse. I am delighted that the Faculty of Occupational Medicine supported by the Royal College of Physicians of Ireland has embraced the report Occupational Health: The Value Proposition. Using this foundation stone and local data the Faculty has developed a well-considered strategic approach to advocate for the value of Occupational Health services in Ireland. If acted upon by stakeholders this should contribute meaningfully to the health of nation’s peoples, businesses and economy.”*

#### Dr Paul Nicolson OBE

Author: Occupational Health: the value proposition. SOM, March 2022

## IMPORTANT STAKEHOLDER ACTIONS

### Stakeholders across sectors have an important role to play in advocating for and delivering the full value of Occupational Health

The Occupational Health community includes medical, public and private providers of Occupational Health, health and safety, toxicology, corporate wellness, hygiene, vocational rehabilitation, physiotherapy, ergonomics, nursing and psychology. Each of these specialisms has an important role to play, not just in delivering quality Occupational Health services, but also advocating for them.

In addition, governmental and allied organisations, educational institutions, employer and employee representatives, the wider medical community, employment law and the wider legal community, and relevant educational institutions are all key to ensuring the full value of Occupational Health is understood and can be delivered to Irish society.

### Role of relevant and interested parties across sectors and communities



#### Government and Allied Organisations

- Advocate for, and deliver, policy enhancements towards universal access to Occupational Health



#### Legal Community

- Advocate for, and deliver, legislative enhancements towards universal access to Occupational Health



#### Employers, Employer and Employee Representative Groups and Associations

- Contribute to evidence base for the evolving need for and value of specific Occupational Health services in the new world of work
- Build on diversity, equity and inclusion efforts to support equitable access to Occupational Health across gender, ability, age, neurodiversity, ethnicity so that services can enhance inclusion of all workers



#### Wider Medical and Educational Communities

- Contribute to research on need for, value of, barriers too, and good practices within Occupational Health
- Drive awareness within their communities, and advocate for, the value of quality Occupational Health
- Encourage accreditation of individuals, and assimilation of evidence-based Occupational Health practices by organisations
- Encourage third level institutions to add Occupational Health into their undergraduate curriculum



#### Occupational Health Community

- Join us in specific strategic action to demonstrate and advocate for the value of Occupational Health in Ireland

## REFERENCES

1. Faculty of Occupational Medicine Governance Framework. Dublin, 2020
2. Faculty of Occupational Medicine Preferred Model of Care for Occupational Medicine in Ireland. Dublin, 2021.
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### Desk research

We are very grateful for the informative desk research conducted by our FOM Specialist Registrars listed below, which has not only elucidated the current employment trends and workplace illness and injury in Ireland, and provided up-to-date evidence for the value of Occupational Health, but also set us up for success in preparing engagement and communications plans in 2023 with insights into key stakeholders and their relevant priorities and areas of interest.

- Dr Patrick Carr
- Dr Amy Carolan
- Dr Jean Engela
- Dr Gordon Haire
- Dr Conor Loftus
- Dr Mary Theresa O'Neill
- Dr Abigail O'Reilly
- Dr Grainne O'Sullivan
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- Dr Maria Tempany

### Expert consultees

- Paul Nicholson OBE, author of Occupational Health: the value proposition, London. Society of Occupational Medicine UK. 2022
- Nick Pahl, CEO, Society of Occupational Medicine UK

### RCPI Communications Team

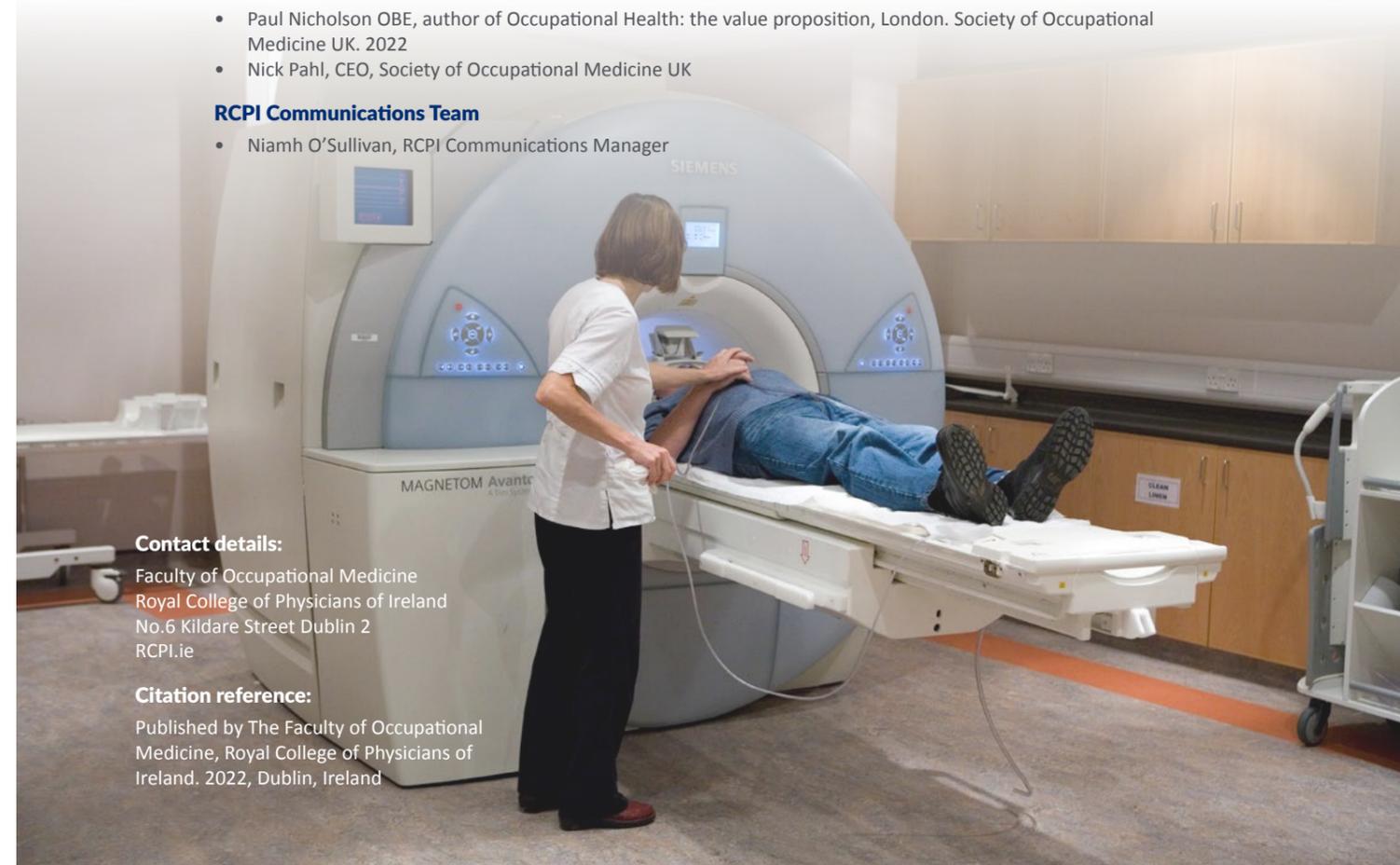
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# FACULTY OF OCCUPATIONAL MEDICINE

ROYAL COLLEGE OF  
PHYSICIANS OF IRELAND



## WE CALL UPON OTHERS TO JOIN US IN SPECIFIC STRATEGIC ACTION TO:

- Demonstrate, drive awareness of, and advocate for, the value of Occupational Health in Ireland
- Encourage accreditation of individuals, and assimilation of evidence-based practices by organisations
- Advocate for policy and legislative enhancements towards universal access to Occupational Health

*“Work is an important part of our lives not least because it accounts for a significant amount of time. It makes sense, therefore, that the relationship between work and health and work is given greater recognition as it is so vital to individual wellbeing and organisational productivity. With the pace of the changes taking place in the world of work, the health and wellbeing of workers must receive an even greater priority. In my experience, Occupational Health can play an important role in early assessment and diagnosis of serious work-related issues, with interventions or treatment often leading to timely effective solutions. However, it is an area that has been under-resourced and under-utilised and, as we continue to live in an era of more rapid workplace change, further investment in and use of occupational medicine will be important for the safety, health and welfare of workers.”*

**Kevin Callinan**

President, Irish Congress of Trade Unions