

# European Academy of Occupational Health Psychology *Newsletter*

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October 2001

## A Changed World: Tragedy Gives Birth to New Challenges

By Professor Tom Cox  
Chair, Organising Committee

The planned publication of this Newsletter has been delayed by the events of 11th September that have touched all of us. On behalf of the European Academy, may I immediately offer our sincere and heart-felt condolences to our colleagues, and their families and friends, in the US who were caught up in those tragic and unjustifiable acts of terrorism. The attack on the US has been rightly understood as an attack on our shared way of life and we must respond to that attack in a considered and resolute way, demonstrating a new awareness and definition of our core values and a new unity of our common purpose.

The world has become a different place and there are now new difficulties to overcome in relation to our working lives and lives outside of work. For occupational health psychology, the changed world of work represents a set of challenges that we must quickly understand and begin to deal with. Changed ways of working are emerging with, for example, a greater emphasis on long-distance communication rather than on long-distance travel, with new and heightened security procedures enhancing existing commitments to employee and public safety, with work-related anxieties taking on a new form and adding to our occupational health concerns, with a greater need to develop occupational health services and fully integrate them with public health provision, particularly in relation to psychological well-being and counselling support. There is now an emergent questioning of the ideal of globalisation, and



Gaudi's Church of the Sagrada Familia, Barcelona

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more. Undoubtedly this new set of priorities and concerns will colour the Academy's Barcelona meeting. Possibly some of the things that we worried about prior to 11th September will now seem trivial.

One of our moral duties is not to be deflected by the threat of further terrorist attacks from going about our lawful business as occupational health psychologists. At the same time, it is only human to feel more threatened than in the past and to want to minimise perceived risk by changing schedules and commitments. Many have done this and likely attendance in Barcelona has been detrimentally affected. However, I will still have the pleasure of welcoming a substantial number of colleagues to our long-planned meeting, in excess of the attendance last year at Nottingham, and I am certain of its success.

The Barcelona meeting is in three parts: the meetings of the three Forums, the Scientific Programme and the Annual Business Meeting. Those who attended the meetings in Lund and Nottingham will be familiar with this format.

I will be asking for a minute's silence at the beginning of the proceedings as a mark of respect to all those innocent people who have suffered and died as a result of the events of 11th September. I would ask those attending to be prepared for this.

The meetings of the Forum for Education, Research and Professional Practice are important for the future development of the Academy, and those attending

have an opportunity to shape that future, as they do in the Annual Business Meeting. There they will have to elect a Chair for the Organising Committee and new Committee members.

The discussions of the Education Forum will be of particular importance this year, given the subsequent US meeting hosted by the National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) and the American Psychological Association (APA) in Tampa (see this Newsletter). This meeting has been called to discuss the future of OHP and OHP education in the US. The Academy has been invited to send a representative to the Tampa meeting to present its views. As a result, it is crucial that we define and agree our overall position as well as make real progress in OHP education in Europe at Barcelona.

Generally, there is work to be done in Barcelona and afterwards, and the Academy needs people to volunteer at the meeting to be actively involved in taking it forward. I would hope that nobody would be too embarrassed to step forward, and all offers of help, as an elected member, or otherwise, will be warmly received and appreciated.

A second number of this Newsletter is planned for soon after the Barcelona meeting to present its deliberations, discussions and outcomes to those who could not attend. I hope that at that point in time, the world scene will appear more hopeful and that the then Chair of the Organising Committee might feel able to write in a more optimistic and positive vein.

## Barcelona Conference: Three Forums

### *Education Forum*

*Forum Chair: Amanda Griffiths*

The European Academy of Occupational Health Psychology (EA-OHP) was established in 1997 to promote OHP in Europe and to represent the European perspective on the world stage. Its activities have been organised through three core forums – Education, Research and Practice. At the outset it was recognised that the Education Forum would be the engine that drove both the definition of OHP as a discrete discipline and also its development as a profession in Europe. At the first Conference of the EA-OHP in Lund in 1999, a number of issues were identified that represent challenges to education in OHP. These include the development of a core curriculum, accreditation by professional bodies, harmonisation of educational processes and qualifications across Europe, and portability and credit transfer between countries.

In 2000, a meeting was hosted by the APA and NIOSH in Washington to discuss the co-ordination

OHP activities in North America and Europe. As a result of that meeting an ad-hoc International Co-ordinating Group (ICG-OHP) was established. It was agreed that discussion of key issues in education would be one of its major concerns. It was also agreed in Washington that, following a NIOSH / APA sponsored meeting of US universities providing education in OHP, the EA-OHP Education Forum would host a workshop on the subject at the Barcelona Conference in 2001. The US meeting is now being held after the Barcelona Conference and will take place in Tampa (see this Newsletter).

The programme for the Education Forum workshop begins with short reviews of current education provision in OHP in Europe. There will then be a round table discussion of the key issues in developing OHP education including an exploration of the role that could be played by the European Academy. The conclusions reached through this discussion will be used to form the basis of a

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Discussion Paper for all members and will also be presented at the NIOSH / APA meeting in Tampa.

One major objective of the workshop is to stimulate discussion about future developments for OHP

education. Developments in education will determine the future direction of our discipline as well as reflecting its past.

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## *Professional Practice Forum: Applied Occupational Health Psychology – Future Changes, Challenges and Chances*

### **Forum Chair: Heinrich Geissler**

The context for the Professional Practice Forum is that there is no common approach to the practice of occupational health psychology in Europe. Across Europe, there are totally different working conditions, regulations, challenges and opportunities. For example, in Austria it has been proposed that a minimum time for the prevention of workplace hazards will be introduced according to the 2002 health and safety regulations. This will enable the workforce to spend up to 25% of the minimum working time with occupational psychologists and other experts (ergonomists, toxicologists and chemists). There is a role here for occupational health psychologists.

In the light of such developments and the distinct differences between European culture and in health and safety legislation, the Organising Group - Kaj B. Andersen, Einar Baldursson and Heinrich Geissler, supported by Karen Brask and Bendt T. Pedersen – decided, during a meeting held in Denmark in April, that a workshop at the Barcelona Congress would provide a good platform for discussing the development of practice in occupational health psychology. It is hoped that the workshop will:

- enable all the participants to create their own agenda according to European differences in the practice of OHP and
- enable the development of a common agenda and actions to be taken forward by the Organising Group of the practice forum.

The roots of occupational health psychology are variously embedded in different European perspectives. Whilst the history of occupational health psychology is of great importance, it is argued here that the future for occupational health psychology that

provides the greatest opportunity for practitioners.

To drive forward a common European approach to the practice of occupational health psychology, an 'Open Space' discussion has been organised. During this open space session, practitioners can share understanding and experiences to identify the future changes, challenges and chances of applied OHP.

The Open Space Method is often used for simultaneous change in (larger) groups in which the participants themselves determine the agenda. The method was developed by Harrison Owen in the mid-1980s in the United States, who noted that discussions during coffee breaks - between meetings and presentations - are very productive for generating ideas. This approach is widely used throughout the world, engaging groups from 10 to 1000 people. The open space method has a few simple rules to support communication. It is an effective method that enables participants to express their interests, it stimulates discussion and provides an excellent opportunity for networking and the development of ongoing working groups, etc.

At the beginning of the Professional Practice Forum participants will identify various issues facing the practice of occupational health psychology that would benefit from further discussion. This active discussion will generate ideas for interest workshops, which will then form the basis of the agenda - thus the participants create their own agenda. Participants then join interest workshops. A plenary session will draw together the discussions of each group. This method will act as an orientation process for the Practice Forum, helping to define the way forward for the practice of occupational health psychology.

We invite You to find Your "place" in an open space!

## Research Forum: From Qualitative to Quantitative Methods

*Forum Chair: Philip Dewe*

It is apparent from the work stress literature that researchers are calling for a period of quiet reconstruction and for more constructive exploration of the issues embodied in the questions “where are current methodologies taking us” and “what can alternative methodologies provide.” This discussion stems from the dissatisfaction expressed by a number of researchers as to whether self-report techniques can actually capture the richness and complexity of stress and coping practice. To these researchers it is now time to consider whether traditional cross-sectional, self-report approaches are simply to blunt an approach for exploring the subtleties of stress and coping, whether we should be examining just what it is we think this measurement approach is actually measuring and what needs to be done to better serve those whose working lives we study.

The arguments about the appropriateness of different methods and the best ways to move stress and coping research forward are intensely debated. While there is a sense of lack of interest between those who favour one approach over another, the

solution does not rest with simply replacing one set of methods with another. The idea of methodological pluralism has attracted some currency, as has the need to look at both how current methods can be refined to better reflect the stress process and the opportunities offered when the stress process is modelled in qualitative terms.

Beginning with an overview of the debate, the programme moves towards exploring the use of different qualitative approaches to understanding the stress process. The aim of each presentation is to provide insights into the theoretical, empirical and practical issues surrounding the use of these different approaches. The focus is on exploring the value such techniques add to our understanding of the stress and coping process. This will be achieved by presenters describing the benefits of using such techniques, the issues involved in applying them, the type of data they provide, the methods of data analysis and the issues surrounding the interpretation of such data, together with the utility of such findings in terms of what makes the findings distinct from those obtained by more established methods and developments for future research.

## Current Research in Europe

### KK Platform

The KK Foundation, Sweden, has funded a major new programme at Kristianstad University to promote healthy and innovative work organisations in Sweden. The programme - the KK Platform - is part of the new Centre for Work, Health & Organisational Learning (WHOLE), situated on the Krinova Science Park, and is directed by Professor Sten-Olof Brenner. The Centre will act as a forum for interdisciplinary research and problem solving in relation to the improvement of working life and is built around the KK Platform. Much of this programme’s work is central to occupational health psychology, and it represents a major European initiative in applied research and practice, and in supporting education, for our discipline.

The KK Platform is a major development for Kristianstad University and draws on and further develops its collaborations with the Universities of



*Professor Sten-Olof Brenner, Director, discussing the KK Platform with Dr Amanda Griffiths, Visiting Chair in Occupational Health Psychology, at a recent meeting in Kristianstad.*

Lund and Nottingham, the University of Manchester Institute of Science and Technology, and the Technical University of Munich. To promote these collaborations, key staff in the supporting universities have been formally involved in or associated with the KK Platform. Dr Clemens Weikert (Lund) is working for the programme part time, while his colleague Professor Curt Johansson is a Scientific Adviser as is Professor André Büssing (Technical University Munich). Professor Paul Jackson (UMIST) and Dr Amanda Griffiths (Nottingham) have been appointed Visiting Professors at Kristianstad University, and Professor Tom Cox (Nottingham) has been appointed as one of the Scientific Mentors to the overall

programme. Joanna Pryce has been appointed by the University of Nottingham to work on its involvement in the KK Platform.

The KK Platform publishes its own Newsletter for those involved in its activities, and will also keep the Academy fully briefed on its progress.

Information on the KK Platform can be obtained from Professor Sten-Olof Brenner ([sten-olof.brenner@bet.hkr.se](mailto:sten-olof.brenner@bet.hkr.se)) or Martin Persson ([martin.persson@bet.hkr.se](mailto:martin.persson@bet.hkr.se)), and information on the Krinova Science Park can be viewed at: [www.Krinova.se](http://www.Krinova.se).

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## Job Insecurity - Consequences for Research and Practice

*Per Øystein Saksvik and Kjell Nytrø*

This article discusses some research related to employee reactions to job insecurity. These reactions are often of an elusive nature and insights into this field will open up for new interpretations of absenteeism, managerial behavior towards vulnerable employees, effects of occupational health interventions, and for the organization of work in general.

The first study we report from was undertaken in a large telecommunications company in the public sector undergoing a major reorganization. More than 3000 employees were identified as redundant, but were not dismissed. Instead they were transferred to a newly established temporary department for redundant personnel. The rest of the non-redundant personnel also perceived high levels of job insecurity due to the fact that most of them had to apply for a job in the reorganized firm.

In this turbulent situation we found a deterioration in the perceived organizational work environment, decreased job satisfaction, higher levels of subjective health complaints and higher turnover intentions (Saksvik, 1996). Our gateopeners in the company expected an increase in absenteeism (they said absenteeism would “explode”), but instead we found a slight decrease. A possible interpretation of this paradox was that attendance pressure might have hindered the employees in using absence as a coping strategy in

this turbulent situation for the firm. Employees with health problems wanted to show themselves indispensable in this threatening situation.

A new study was conducted (Saksvik, 1997) to explore the issue of attendance pressure. We used the demands-control model of Karasek & Theorell (1990) as our conceptual foundation. We found that the form of attendance pressure labeled ‘censure pressure’, i.e. a perception of mistrust from fellow workers and managers about self-reported reasons for not attending work, was associated with low decision latitude and high job demands. We concluded that high censure pressure seems to have possible health threatening effects.

Job insecurity has recently also been experienced by the employees in the Norwegian Postal Service. During 1996, the employees in the Postal Service in Norway were informed about severe restructuring, with the closing of about 50% of the post offices before the end of the decade, and about 4000 employees had to leave their jobs. Job insecurity and the possibility for being outsourced became a real stressor for the first time in the Norwegian Postal Service. Some months before the restructuring was announced, an intervention study designed as a field experiment was taking place in order to identify health-promoting interventions. What we observed in this situation was that possible positive effects of interventions were “knocked out” by the novel threats of restructuring (Nytrø, Saksvik, Mikkelsen, Bohle & Quinlan, 2000; Saksvik & Nytrø, 2001). The conclusion from this and other workplace

interventions we have evaluated is that middle management plays a crucial role in the process of implementing interventions. Also, external constraints like reorganization and contemporary competing in-house projects influence the process (Saksvik, Nytrø, Dahl-Jørgensen & Mikkelsen, 2001).

### Implications

Our research has pointed to some effects of job insecurity that may lead to covert psychological processes that may create ill-health or reduced chances for recovery, can influence the interpretation of absenteeism figures and may disturb the implementation process of occupational health and stress interventions.

### Health effects

Regarding health effects we have shown that workers with low control, high demands and a history of former health problems and absenteeism are facing a difficult situation during reorganizations. The important factor is the reactions the vulnerable employees meet attending work again after periods of absenteeism. More or less voluntarily, colleagues and superiors react with negative comments and dismissal. In a position of high sensitivity to such reactions the employee is building up negative attitudes towards the job. If the attendance pressure is high enough, further absenteeism in order to cope with health problems and presumably recovery, is not considered as a relevant alternative. What seems to be the only lasting solution is to reconsider the organization of work in order to avoid job insecurity consequences of reorganizations.

### Absenteeism

It is supposed that suppressing shorter periods of absenteeism leads to more serious health problems and longer periods of absenteeism in the long run; thus absenteeism can operate as a coping mechanism in order to handle difficult and health-threatening working conditions (Saksvik & Nytrø, 2001). The long-term effects of suppressing time for recovery in such situations are not much illuminated in the literature. In a job insecurity situation the social system may lose its significance or the signals from the work group are in favor of going out of one's way. This may be one of the reasons why absenteeism figures drop or remain stable in periods of reorganization. The absenteeism figures by no means give an indication of the present health situation of the employees in times of job insecurity.

### Interpreting the results of interventions

Due to the uniqueness and complexity of modern work organizations, it may be difficult to develop universal solutions to improving health at work. We therefore suggest that process evaluation of interventions is conducted to investigate the impact of the implementation process on the results of interventions. The problem with the traditional

experimental effect studies lies in the ongoing structural changes and the complexity of modern working life that makes longitudinal studies difficult. Job insecurity will always be there as a "confounding" element. An alternative we recommend is to use ongoing changes as a site for natural experiments and to use combined methodologies to evaluate the results.

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## White Paper on Research Needs

Very shortly NIOSH will release the white paper on research needs in work organization and health that was prepared under the auspices of the US National Occupational Research Agenda.

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# Conference Report

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## EAWOP, Prague, May 2001

*Monique van der Hulst*

The Tenth European Congress on Work and Organizational Psychology was held in Prague From the 16<sup>th</sup> to the 19<sup>th</sup> of May 2001. This biannual conference, organised by the European Association of Work and Organizational Psychology (EAWOP), concerns the whole field of work psychology, organizational psychology, and personnel psychology. This implies that the number of topics covered was very large.

The conference was attended by about 800 participants and had a very busy programme with keynote speakers, oral presentation sessions, symposiums, poster presentations, and excursions. Most of the time there were twelve parallel sessions to choose from, which was not an easy task. From the perspective of occupational health psychology, the sessions concerning job stress and strain, health

consequences of service work, sickness absenteeism, and stress interventions (to name a few) were most relevant.

Job stress and strain was perhaps the research theme that received most attention during the conference, which shows that it is a very active and continuously developing field of research, with lively discussions concerning theories and research methodology. A quick look at the lists of presenters shows that work and health is a topic that is almost exclusively studied by researchers from Scandinavia, the UK and the Netherlands. Perhaps this conference has stimulated international cooperation, also with researchers from other countries in Europe and the rest of the world.

*Monique van der Hulst*

*Department of Work and Organizational Psychology,  
University of Nijmegen, The Netherlands*

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## News from Affiliate Members

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### US Education Programmes in OHP

*Steve Sauter, Tom Cox, Heather Roberts Fox, Gwen Keita and Amanda Griffiths*

From 31st November to 2nd December, all eleven universities funded by NIOSH and the APA to develop education programs in OHP will participate in a meeting hosted by Paul Spector at the University of South Florida, Tampa. Together they will discuss the formalization of OHP and OHP education in the US. Beyond the obvious progress that this meeting signals in the development of OHP in the US, it will also mark an important step forward for OHP education world-wide.

Although OHP and OHP-related topics have been featured in numerous scientific and professional meetings in the US over the last decade, this is first meeting of all the educational institutions involved. The provisional agenda questions are set out below and are as relevant for Europe as they are for the US. As a result, the

discussions in Tampa are bound to mirror those to be held at the Education Forum of the Academy in Barcelona.

The topics to be addressed at the Tampa meeting will include:

- 1) candidates and qualifications for education in OHP,
- 2) core curricula and curricula needs for different career trajectories,
- 3) resource and curricula development needs,
- 4) professional recognition of OHP,
- 5) collaboration between OHP and relevant organizations, associations, APA divisions,
- 6) creating external demand for OHP professionals,
- 7) key research needs in OHP, and
- 8) development of a more formal infrastructure for OHP in the U.S.

NIOSH and APA have encouraged and supported education in OHP in the US for over a decade. Initially, the focus was on post-doctoral programmes, but for a variety of reasons, this focus has now been broadened to include graduate education. Most of the courses currently offered are at the graduate level and take the form of a module, or set of modules to the level of a minor subject. There is not yet a full degree programme available similar to the University of Nottingham MSc degree in occupational health psychology.

When the International Co-ordinating Group for OHP was formed in Washington last year, it was thought that the US meeting referred to here would be held in advance of the Barcelona congress, and that the key members of NIOSH and APA would attend the Education Forum to input the conclusions of the US meeting. In the event, Barcelona will occur *before* the US meeting, and, sadly, our US colleagues will not now be able to attend. However, they have invited a representative from the Academy, Dr Eusebio Rial-Gonzalez, to take part in their discussions. He will present and elaborate on the reviews of OHP and education in OHP prepared for NIOSH by Professor Tom Cox and Dr Amanda Griffiths, respectively, and also present the outcomes of the discussions in the Education Forum. Perhaps the most important outcomes from those discussions will be: [1] the definition of OHP as a basis for educational development, [2] thoughts on a core syllabus as a framework for such developments, [3] structures for the formal recognition of education in

OHP in Europe, [4] a provisional list of 'recognised' courses in Europe, and [5] an infra-structure through the Academy for future educational developments and the management of relations with the US and Canada.

The feeling in Europe and in North America is that the future of OHP rests in large part in our investment in education at all appropriate levels. Tomorrow's champions and practitioners for OHP are today's students. It is essential to nurture and encourage them, and professionally manage their education and development; it is sensible to do this in a way that promotes *one* OHP world-wide, and, in an era of globalisation, provides one framework for course and individual recognition. This is, in part, the implicit mission of the *International Co-ordinating Group*.

## Conference

Following four successful APA/NIOSH meetings on "Work, Stress and Health" that were held throughout the 1990's, we are delighted to inform you that the fifth international meeting on "Work, Stress and Health" will take place in Toronto, Canada, from March 19-22, 2003.

Further information (e.g., call for papers, venue) will follow in due course. In the meantime, we trust that you will schedule this meeting into your calendar and plan to join us.

If you have any questions or suggestions, please feel free to contact:

Julian Barling ([jbarling@business.queensu.ca](mailto:jbarling@business.queensu.ca))

## EA-OHP Membership News

### Academy Membership Profile

*Louise Thomson, Institute of Work, Health and Organisations, University of Nottingham*

The Academy's membership structure and criteria was agreed at the first Annual Meeting of the European Academy of Occupational Health Psychology in Lund, November 1999. The Managing Committee set up the membership application procedure and designed the application form at the beginning of 2000 and by June 2000 we were accepting our first members.

We now have over 100 members and are still receiving a steady number of applications. *(Continued on page 10)*

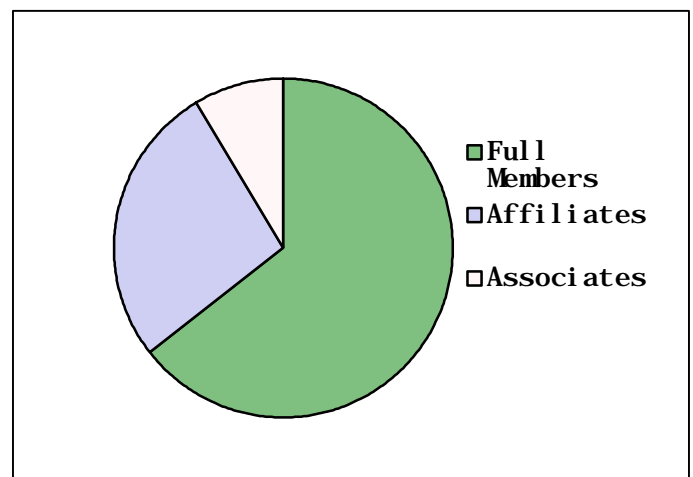
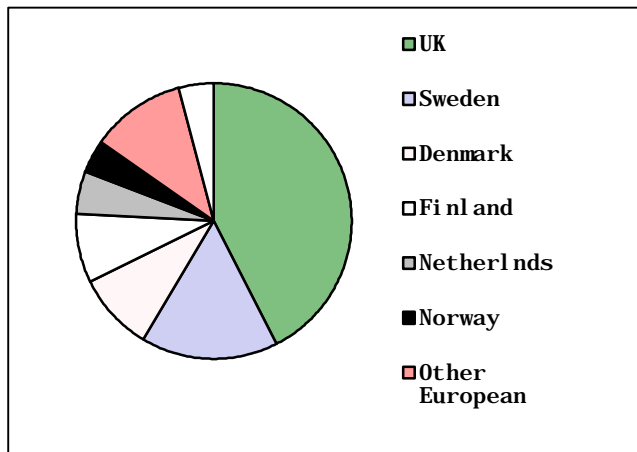


Fig 1. Types of member





The current membership profile shows that we have representatives from a wide range of nations, although the largest proportion of members (42%) are currently UK-based. (See Figure 1..)

The majority of members are Full Members, but we also have increasing numbers of Affiliate members (those with less than three years experience in Occupational Health Psychology) and Associate members (non-psychologists and non-Europeans). This is illustrated in figure 2 (left)..

Fig 2. Members' country of residence

## New Membership Renewal Schedule

With the increasing number of members, the Academy has decided to rationalise its membership renewal date in a way that benefits both existing and new members. Up to now, all memberships have run for 12 months from the date of joining. From September 2001, ALL memberships will be renewable on 1<sup>st</sup> January each year.

For existing members, the following schedule of membership renewals will be applied:

- Members who joined in 2000 will renew on 1st January 2002
- Members who joined between January and September 2001 will renew on 1st January 2003

This means that existing members will get free extra months of membership during this period of rationalisation.

For new members, the following schedule and fees structure will be applied:

- New members wishing to join between January and June will pay the full annual fee for that year
- New members wishing to join between July and October will pay half the annual fee for that year
- New members wishing to join in November and December will pay the full fee for the coming year and get the remaining part of the year in which they join for free.

This means that any new members who wish to join

during the remainder of 2001 will get free membership until 1<sup>st</sup> January 2002.

A Membership Helpdesk will be in the foyer at the Barcelona Congress in October to deal with any enquiries from current members and to help new members who wish to join the Academy.

## Discounted Subscription to Work & Stress

One of the benefits of the membership package is a discounted individual subscription to the international journal *Work & Stress*. Members of the Academy can receive an annual subscription for £46 (less than half the normal rate). To take advantage of this offer, please complete the form via the Academy website:

<http://www.ea-ohp.org/workandstress/index.htm>

*Send the completed form to:*

Eusebio Rial-Gonzalez  
 Institute of Work, Health & Organisations  
 Nottingham University  
 Jubilee Campus  
 Wollaton Road  
 Nottingham NG8 1BB, United Kingdom

## New Member of the Membership Committee

We would like to introduce you to a new member of the Membership Committee. Debbie Ellingham joined us in June 2001 and will be providing administrative support to the committee.

## News from the Editorial Team

Subscribers to Work & Stress, which is published in association with the Academy, will have noticed that the journal's cover has been redesigned! The journal, now in its 15<sup>th</sup> year, retains its characteristic colours of red and black, but is now printed on a silver grey background.

Another, less obvious change is to the title. The word *and* is now abbreviated to an ampersand (&). Strictly, references to papers published in the journal up to and including the year 2000 should be correctly cited with the word "and". Citations to papers dated from 2001 onwards should use the ampersand.

The journal's publishers and editorial team were delighted to learn that the Science Citation Index has given Work and Stress an impact factor of 0.824 for the year 2000. The impact factor is derived from the

number of citations to papers in the journal in relation to the total number of papers published. This high impact factor is greater than that of comparative journals in the field. Contributors can be assured that their papers are widely cited and read.

Information on Work & Stress can be found at the website:

<http://www.journals.tandf.co.uk/journals/tf/02678373.html>

Academy members can obtain the journal at a greatly discounted rate, using an application form that can be accessed from the academy's website:

[www.EA-OHP.ORG](http://www.EA-OHP.ORG)

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### Contributions for the next issue of the *Newsletter* are invited!

Short articles, conference announcements, news items and relevant photographs are all welcome. Readers are also interested to read about the institutions, programmes and research projects that their colleagues are involved with.

Please send all items to: [mary.tisserand@nottingham.ac.uk](mailto:mary.tisserand@nottingham.ac.uk)

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