

HISTORY OF OCCUPATIONAL MEDICINE

Project concept for a project by RACP (AFOEM and Library) and ANZSOM

Background

In 2018 the Australian and New Zealand Society of Occupational Medicine (ANZSOM) compiled a history of occupational medicine in Australia to celebrate its 50th anniversary.

In 2023 we will be celebrating the 30th year of recognition of the specialty of occupational medicine in Australia and 2024 will be the 30th year since the foundation of the Australasian Faculty of Occupational and Environmental Medicine (AFOEM) in the Royal Australasian College of Physicians (RACP).

Also, it has been recognised that the second generation of occupational physicians in Australia, whose careers span a period of unparalleled changes in the nature of industry and employment, and the organisation and management of work place and health and safety policy and services, are in the process of transitioning to retirement.

It would seem that now is an opportune time to capture the information they have, before it is lost, and to draw together and build on existing efforts to describe our professional history. These include the work done by ANZSOM referred to above, and a series of oral histories with occupational physicians transitioning to retirement being undertaken by Dr Farhan Shahzad, and published in the AFOEM President's Newsletter.

Proposed project concept

It is proposed that the RACP (AFOEM and the Library) jointly with ANZSOM establish a virtual archive for Occupational and Environmental Medicine in Australia.

This archive would take the form of a timeline published on the AFOEM and ANZSOM webpages (jointly badged). The timeline would list key events in our heritage illustrated with photos of people/events, documents etc, with the capacity for users to click/scroll through to obtain further information, including oral video / audio histories with key players.

A supplementary project is proposed by which a skeletal timeline for the RACP as a whole be developed contemporaneously, recognising that the occupational medicine project may become a model for other specialties within the RACP, and having an overarching framework in place would be beneficial.

Objectives

The following objectives of the occupational medicine project are proposed:

- Prevent the loss of information held by occupational physicians on the changing nature of industry, work and employment, work-related conditions of importance, and the organisation and management of workplace health and safety services in Australia and New Zealand
- Promote the role and contribution of Occupational Physicians to Australia and New Zealand
- Demonstrate the scope of practice over time (currently occupational medicine is quite narrow in scope, younger occupational physicians would like to see broadened opportunity)
- Provide a model for describing the heritage of the specialties that make up the RACP.

Approach to the project

The creation of the archive will have three strands:

- Developing content for the timelines
- Doing a witness seminar
- Developing the webpages.

Content for the timelines

Under the guidance of historian and Chair of the Library Committee, Dr Catherine Storey, the working group will gather and consolidate information to populate the occupational medicine timeline. It is expected that this will be very participatory with members of AFOEM and ANZSOM being invited to contribute material. As noted the existing work undertaken by ANZSOM will be an important starting point as will the interviews currently being undertaken by Dr Shahzad.

Dr Catherine Storey will also lead the development of the timeline for the RACP, supported by the Librarian.

Witness seminar

‘A witness seminar is a method of collecting oral history material, whereby a number of people connected to an event or topic meet to share recollections of their involvement. The results may be recorded or videoed and an edited transcript published.’ It is an efficient way of collecting material and allows for differences in recollections of events to be identified and understood. Success relies heavily on the calibre of the facilitator.

It is proposed to hold a witness seminar, as a part of an existing scientific meeting of either ANZSOM or AFOEM. A two-hour meeting is proposed with a social opportunity afterwards to encourage further discussion and generation of information.

Discussion will be triggered by short presentations on various themes from invited speakers and display material, probably both audiovisual and written content.

At this stage it seems that the ANZSOM meeting in November 2021 on the Gold Coast (TBC by ANZSOM) may be the next opportunity to do this, as it is considered highly desirable for this to be done face to face.

Given the supervision of the project by a medical historian, there is scope for this work to provide research opportunities for trainees interested in the history of medicine.

The output of the first witness seminar will be a video recording, and annotated transcript.

It is proposed that support for *developing the webpages* be provided by the RACP IT Department in liaison with a representative from the working party. Developing the website for both timelines will be considered as one project element.

As mentioned above it is recognised that the RACP is seeking to lift its member engagement using readily available software. It is proposed to take a participative approach to this work. This could include surveys of members of the two organisations for topics of particular interest, promotion of opportunities to contribute material and ideas, blogs on the development of the archive, and calls for AFOEM trainees who would like to work on the first witness seminar under the supervision of a historian, as their research project. A *communication strategy* will be developed early in the project.

Once the timeline has been established and the witness seminar undertaken a new resource describing the history of occupational medicine in Australia will be undertaken. The format for this is yet to be determined, but given the material captured at the witness seminar it could be a video, with or without an accompanying written publication. It is proposed that this work would be a major contribution to the celebration of the 30th anniversary of the recognition of occupational medicine as a specialty.

It is proposed that the archive would have an *ongoing* life. It would be maintained and used by interested people, within and outside the professional organisations, including trainees wishing to do an historical project to meet the research component of the training program and further witness seminars.

Timelines

Launch of project at ANZSOM meeting	November 22, 2020
Communication strategy, including member engagement plan Plan for webpage development and testing	February 2021
Program and plan for witness seminar finalised	March 2021
Draft content for 2 timelines developed	July 2021
Witness seminar	November 2021
Outputs from witness seminar – video and annotated transcript finalised	March 2022
Webpages launched	May 2022
Products for 30 anniversary planned	July 2022
Products for 30 th anniversary finalised	2023

Resources

Consideration of resourcing is limited to the production of the archive and the conduct of the first witness seminar. There is no provision for the products for the 30th anniversary, yet to be determined.

It is assumed that the work can be undertaken within the existing resources of the RACP and ANZSOM, apart from the witness seminar, which may require some sponsorship, as is customary for aspects of the conference under the umbrella of which this event would be conducted.

In kind contributions sought from each organisation is summarised below.

RACP	In kind contribution
Working group members	It is expected that the bulk of the work will be done by the working group. Admin support for meetings is not requested
AFOEM administration	Assistance with implementation of the communication strategy, particularly member engagement
Librarian	Support to Chair of the Library Committee in development of the internal medicine timeline Occasional support to the Chair of the Library Committee on occupational medicine research
RACP IT	Development of webpages with assistance from a member of the working group

ANZSOM	In kind contribution
Working group members	It is expected that the bulk of the work will be done by the working group. Admin support for meetings is not requested
Meeting organisers for Nov 21	Support for organising and running witness seminar including videoing Support for finding sponsor if needed

Governance

The working party comprises:

- Niki Ellis (Chair), AFOEM
- Cate Storey, Chair Library Committee
- Farhan Shahzad, AFOEM
- Dwight Dowda, AFOEM
- Melinda Miller, President ANZSOM
- Dominic Yong, ANZSOM rep on AFOEM Council,

It is proposed that the working group seek approval for this from, then report jointly to AFOEM Council and the Library Committee on progress twice a year.