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Faculty of Occupational Medicine

Faculty welcomes CMO statement on mental health in the workplace

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The Faculty of Occupational Medicine has welcomed the statement by Dame Sally Davies, Chief Medical Officer for England, about the need to support people with mental health problems in the workplace. Dame Sally said:

'We know that work is good for mental health...But what I am concerned about is how do we support people with mental ill-health who fall out of work. How do we prevent them falling out of work and how do we get them back into work because this is costing us a lot in upset for those people and their families as well as our economy.'

In her [annual report](#) Dame Sally said that:

- In 2011/12 mental health problems (such as anxiety, stress and depression) were the most prevalent work-related illness (38%) in Great Britain, with musculoskeletal problems at 28%
- Mental health problems represent the most common reason for claiming health-related benefits, accounting for 45% of all claimants
- Better awareness of mental health at work could help to reduce stigma and improve outcomes and productivity for the workforce as whole

Faculty President Dr Richard Heron commented:

'Dame Sally's emphasis on the importance of mental health at work is greatly welcomed. Occupational health professionals have a key role helping people with existing health problems get into and stay in healthy workplaces. We also have a critical role working with employers to reduce risks - every year about 400,000 people in the UK report work-related stress at a level they believe is making them ill. This is bad for affected individuals, their families and their employers - approximately 80 million days are lost in the UK, as a result of mental illness, with an estimated cost to employers of £1.2 billion.'

'We can help employers see why they should and how they can prevent ill-health; matching work demands to capabilities, understand the importance of recognising staff when they do a good job and providing them with a supportive work environment.'

'Our role in the Faculty is to better equip occupational health professionals to support employees and employers in addressing mental health issues. Over the last year we have run a conference on hidden disabilities in the workplace, which focused on mental health, as well as a professional briefing day, and mental health will be our primary topic at the annual scientific meeting in May next year.'

'We shall continue to see this as a priority and also look forward to supporting Dame Sally in raising awareness about the impact of poor mental health and how this can be effectively addressed.'