

**EXPLORATION OF THE ROLE OF THE OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH NURSE IN GREECE**  
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Occupational health nurses are highly capable practitioners providing skilled expertise for the improvement of workers' health and safety. In Greece, it is not obligatory for the employer to employ occupational health nurses. However, the legislation in effect allows their employment in workplaces, usually after the occupational physician's proposal.

The aim of this study was to investigate the role of occupational health nurses in Greek everyday practice. The study was designed as qualitative because of the lack of research data in Greece and the difficulty in approaching an adequate number of nurses, representative of their general population. The data were collected from volunteer OHNs by interviews and were analysed according to the qualitative content analysis method.

The results were categorized in four basic thematic units and were compared with the Greek and international literature. The thematic units that were studied concern the level of education of OHNs in Greece, the way they conceive their role, the problems they encounter and the changes that have happened in the course of time in the profession as well as the areas that could be improved. It was found that the occupational health nurses in Greece, although they are deprived specialised education following registration as general nurses or public health nurses, perceive the content of their role, to a large extent, as multifunctional and in agreement with what is met in the international literature. Namely they see themselves as clinical nurses, that protect and promote workers health; managers; teachers; researchers; legal advisors and as the ones that work with the community to ensure the best and more efficient service provision for their clients.

During the recent years in Greece, there has been an increasing interest in the field of occupational health and safety. As the number of nurses that turn to this field increases, the need to provide these professionals with substantial education on the subject is imperative. This study gives the stimulus for further research in the field of occupational health in Greece.