

# The Health and Occupation Research Network (THOR)

## Information Sheet

April 2018

### What is THOR (ROI)?

THOR (ROI) is a Health and Occupation Research network comprising of four surveillance schemes collecting data on work related illness (WRI) in the Republic of Ireland (ROI). WRI data is voluntarily reported online by occupational physicians, chest physicians, dermatologists and general practitioners. As the data is reported anonymously, patients cannot be identified. The data provides valuable information on the types of WRIs, causal agents and the industry sectors they occur in.

### Who manages THOR?

While the Health and Safety Authority (HSA) financially supports and promotes THOR (ROI) the University of Manchester administers it. Every year the University of Manchester produces annual reports of the number and type of occupational illness cases reported each year along with a compiled report covering the period from 2005 up to the present year. These annual reports also provide a comparison of WRI's cases in Northern Ireland and Great Britain. Summary reports and full reports are available on the HSA's website.

### How does the HSA use the data?

Data on WRI's is a valuable and important source of information which helps inform the HSA's policy and work programmes in the area of occupational illness prevention. There is no complete picture of WRI's incidence, so data in THOR can be compared with data from other schemes (Central Statistics Office, Quarterly National Household Survey and Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection, Occupational Injuries and Illness Benefit Schemes). In particular, the THOR report gives important information on the type of WRI, causative agents and the sectors in which it occurs, giving the HSA the ability to identify trends over a period of time as well as the possibility to identify new and emerging WRIs.

The report is used to inform the HSA's inspection activities in certain sectors. One example of this is in the area of work related stress (WRS). As a result of the relatively large number of reports of WRS in healthcare, the HSA is now actively looking for evidence of WRS risk assessments in healthcare settings such as in A&E departments during its inspections.



Another example of where the HSA uses the data from the THOR report is in the prioritisation of guidance development. The HSA guidance for those working in nail parlours and salons was initiated as a result of information from THOR of increased incidents of allergic reactions and dermatitis in the sector.

Data from the report is also used to prioritise awareness and enforcement of specific topics like the HSA's campaign on respirable crystalline silica in the construction sector.



### The benefits of reporting to THOR

Although currently it is doctors who voluntarily report to THOR, employers who engage the services of occupational physicians or other doctors/clinical practitioners are encouraged to promote reporting of occupational illnesses to the network for the benefits outlined above. The more doctors reporting, the more reliable the data for making evidence based policy on the prevention of WRIs.

The Faculty of Occupational Medicine of the Royal College of Physicians in Ireland is presently working with the HSA to encourage more occupational physicians to report.

The benefits for medical professionals reporting to THOR (ROI) should not be underestimated:

- Reporting activity can be used by medical professionals for continuing professional development (CPD)
- Physicians and clinical practitioners can share and discuss cases with other reporters, as well as providing them with a source of information for medical report writing
- Opportunities are provided for research in WRIs, scientific paper writing and presenting
- Assists in identifying hazards, estimating risks and evaluating interventions
- It helps in the prevention of WRI's by assisting the HSA identify specific areas for greater focus on particular WRI's

### Further details

- For more information and to register with THOR ROI, visit the online reporting network platform at <http://research.bmh.manchester.ac.uk/epidemiology/COEH/research/thor/schemes/ireland/>
- THOR reports are available at [www.hsa.ie](http://www.hsa.ie) under Topics/Illness Reports ([http://www.hsa.ie/eng/Workplace\\_Health/Illness\\_Reports/](http://www.hsa.ie/eng/Workplace_Health/Illness_Reports/)).



### Further Information and Guidance:

Visit our website at [www.hsa.ie](http://www.hsa.ie), telephone our contact centre on **1890 289 389** or email [wcu@hsa.ie](mailto:wcu@hsa.ie)

Use BeSMART, our free online risk assessment tool at [www.besmart.ie](http://www.besmart.ie)

Check out our range of free online courses at [www.hsalearning.ie](http://www.hsalearning.ie)