

History of the American Association of Occupational Health Nurses, Inc. (AAOHN)

Early Occupational Health Nursing History and AAOHN Roots

1888: A Pennsylvania coal company hired Betty Moulder, RN, to care for workers and their families; this was the early practice of occupational health nursing case management.

1895: The Vermont Marble Company hired Ada Mayo Stewart, RN, to provide nursing services to employees and their families as well as community residents who could not afford private health care.

1897: The Benefit Association of the John Wanamaker Company of New York hired a nurse to visit the sick and see that funds were distributed fairly. (Anne B. Duncan).

1899: A nurse was hired by the Frederick Loeser Department Store in Brooklyn.

1906: Ten businesses had hired nurses.

1909: Metropolitan Life Insurance Company hired nurses in Manhattan at the request of public health nurse Lillian Wald.

The Milwaukee Visiting Nurses Association provided nursing services to industry.

1912: Thirty-eight nurses were employed by businesses.

The National Organization of Public Health and the National Safety Council formed.

1913: A Registry opened in Boston for nurses to work in factory emergency rooms.

1914: World War I began; sixty firms employed industrial nurses.

1915: Boston Industrial Nurses Club formed; it became the Massachusetts Industrial Nurses Association, and later, the New England Association of Industrial Nurses.

1916: The Factory Nurses Conference was formed, and affiliated with the American Nurses Association (ANA).

1917: Boston University College of Business Administration offered the first course in industrial nursing, including 160 lectures, a two-week practicum, and job placement for industrial nurses.

1918: Nursing services were provided to workers insured by Metropolitan Life; 1,213 nurses were employed in 871 businesses.

1920: Florence Swift Wright wrote the book, *Industrial Nursing* (McGrath).

1922: The Factory Nurses Conference became the American Association of Industrial Nurses (AAIN); Winnifred Hardiman, RN became the first president of this first AAIN. *This original association became part of the New England Association during the Depression due to lack of employed industrial nurses.*

1925: The Metropolitan Life Insurance Company nurses, using their case management system, saved the company \$43 million since 1909.

1926: Louise Tattersall published the Census of Public Health Nursing in the United States in the *Public Health Nurse*. This study included industrial nurses.

The Thirties

Social Security and National Labor Relations Act (Wagner)

1930: 3,189 nurses were employed in industry and commerce.

1933: The Joint Conference of Industrial Nurses associations included the New England Association of Industrial Nurses, New Jersey, New York, and Philadelphia.

1934-1937: The Detroit Association became part of the Joint Conference and over the next three years, 27 more local and regional industrial nurses association became conference member.

1937: 2,200 nurses worked in industry.

The Forties

World War II and Taft-Hartley Act

1941: 6,244 occupational health nurses are employed in the United States.

1942: All organizations that focused on workplace nursing voted to create the first national association – the American Association of Industrial Nurses (AAIN) with \$250 in start-up money and dues of 50¢. AAIN was formally recognized by the American Association of Industrial Physicians and Surgeons (later to become the Industrial Medical Association and then the Association College of Occupational and Environmental Medicine or ACOEM) and were invited to hold a joint conference.

1943: Since 1941, the number of nurses employed in business and industry doubled; 12,838 industrial nurses are registered and 11,220 nurses actively working in industrial jobs.

1943: The first annual conference was held at New York's Roosevelt Hotel, during the first two days in May, with 17 states and Canada represented. By-laws were adopted and objectives articulated. Winnifred Hardiman was honored and became the first Chairman of the Education Committee. An annual conference has been held every year since, except for 1945 during World War II.

1944:

- Catherine R. Dempsey, an employee of the Simplex Wire and Cable Company in Cambridge, Massachusetts, was elected the first president.
- The first journal, *Industrial Nursing* was published by Industrial Medicine.
- Its second annual conference, The War Conference on Industrial Health, was held in St. Louis with the American Association of Industrial Physicians and Surgeons and the American Industrial Hygiene Association.
- The *Outline of Basic College Courses for Industrial Nurses* was published. As the result, six universities and one college established a Bachelor of Science Degree in Industrial Nursing.
- A joint committee was formed with the American Nurses Association formed to study the Wage an Hour Law because it did not classify the industrial nurse as a “professional”.
 - Gladis Dendorf became the Executive Secretary to carry out the administrative work; she was followed by Elizabeth Andrews.
 - There were 300 members. Its dues were \$3.

1945:

- *Qualifications of Nurses in Industry* was published and sent them to US employers.
 - Headquarters located in New York City

1946:

- State chapters were formed for the first time and local groups were encouraged to join the state chapters.
- A Professional Standards Committee was established. An education fund was established with funding from and in memory of Pauline Kuehler.
 - Mary Doughrty became the Executive Secretary and was replaced by Gay Maryhew in 1947 - 1954.

1947:

- Mary E. Delehanty became president.
- Representatives were appointed to the Committee on Curriculum of the National League of Nursing Education.

1949:

- *Industrial Nursing* was replaced with a newsletter and Janet Geister was retained to write for the newsletter.

The Fifties

Rock-'n-Roll, Elvis, Eisenhower ("Ike"), 1st Clean Air Act

1950:

- Model constituency by-laws were created. Preparation began to draft policies and procedures for national committees.
- A survey of employment policies of industrial nurses was conducted in 28 states by the Committee on Professional Standards, with a resulting report that influenced the raising of standards.

1951:

- Thelma J. Durham became president.
- The first annual Membership Award to a Chapter was based on a trophy presented to AAIN by the Philadelphia Association of Industrial Nurses.
- Discussions began about the testing and certification of industrial nurses.

1952:

- The decade-old AAIN made the decision that remaining an independent association, separate from other nursing associations, was in the best interest of its members.
- A statement was issued against collective bargaining for nurses in industry.
- A special Planning Committee was appointed to create a long-range plan for growth and expanded services.
 - AAIH was incorporated.
 - Irma McDevitt Tabershaw was appointed the first field consultant.

1953:

- Sara P. Wagner became president.
- The first issue of the *Industrial Nurses Journal* was published. One of the first journals indicated that the OHN salary averaged \$50-&70/week.
- The first annual face-to-face Presidents' Meeting was held in NYC, an activity that continued until 2009, under various names (Conference of Leaders in 1997 and Conference for Leadership Advancement in 2007). The meetings alternated between NYC and Washington, DC until 2001 when they began rotating between regions.
- AAIN created their first lapel pin.
 - Dues were \$10.

1954:

- Local and state constituencies began conducting more educational programs.
- The way was paved at the XI International Congress on Industrial Medicine for the admission of industrial nurses.
 - Margaret Hargrave became the first Executive Director.

1955:

- The first Chapter Educational Award was presented, at the behest of the Georgia Association of Industrial Nurses in honor of Margaret Currie. A second Chapter Educational Award was created in 1957 based on an award presented by the Ohio Association of Industrial Nurses in Christina Sinkula's name.

1956:

- The practice of meeting jointly with the American Industrial Medical Association was firmly established. (This later became the American Industrial Health Conference and morphed into the American Occupational Health Conference or AOHC.)
- The first professional conference exhibit was created.
 - There were 4,291 members

1957:

- Gertrude A. Stewart becomes president.
- The first joint AAIN and National League of Nursing Education Conference Committee issued *The Guide for Evaluating and Teaching Occupational Health Nursing Concepts*.
- Fourteen members represented AAIN and two papers were presented at the International Congress of Health in Helsinki.
- Mary Louise Brown gave the first television lecture on occupational health nursing.
 - Dues were \$15/year. Ellen Casey became the Executive Director.

1958:

- AAIN participated in the planning of the US President's Conference on Occupational Safety and became a member of the original National Health Council.
- Policy statements were issued on malpractice insurance.
- The first editor, Margaret Carnine, for the *Industrial Nursing Journal* was hired to work under the direction of the Editorial Board. For the third year in a row, the journal won the Public Interest Award from the National Safety Council.
 - By now every state except North and South Dakota and Nevada had a state chapter. There were 77 local and state and two regional associations. Criteria were developed for evaluating chapters for awards.
 - The association has 4,482 members.

1959:

- Margaret L. Steele was elected president.

The Sixties

JF Kennedy & Martin Luther King, the Beatles, Moon Walk, Bell-bottoms, Free Love, the Vietnam War, Peace, Sit-ins, Medicare/Medicaid

1960:

- The first Catherine Demsey Lecture was delivered at the annual Conference in Rochester, NY.
- *Briefings*, with discussions of issues affecting OHN, were sent to all constituents.
- A Public Relations Committee began publishing brochures and pamphlets for industrial nurses.
- Representatives attended the XIII International Congress on Occupational Health when it met in the US for the first time, in NYC.
 - AAIN conducted its first membership drive and increased membership by 293.
 - Membership was 4,339.

1961:

- Every constituent association has some form of continuing education, and thirty-one associations had educational programming in association with a university or college.
- Ruth G. Whitfield assumed the presidency.
- *Industrial Nursing*, a brochure explaining the specialty of industrial nursing and the work industrial nurses could do was published and widely distributed.

1964:

- The title of AAIN's official publication, *American Association of Industrial Nurses Journal*, became *The Journal of Occupational Health Nursing*, and was copyrighted. Charles Slack, Inc. of Pitman, New Jersey, was named publisher.
 - Helen Rush became Executive Director.

1965:

- Edna Watson became president.
- While a Professional Standards Committee had been in place since 1946, *Standards for Evaluating Occupational Health Nursing Services* was published with ensuing Standards updates being issued every three to five years until today. The Code of Ethics, likewise, has been in existence since before this time and was last updated in 2009.
- AAIN made a liability insurance plan available to members.

1966:

- AAIN worked with the American Speech and Hearing Association, American Industrial Hygiene Association and the American Industrial Medical Association to develop a *Guide to Training Courses for Audiometric Technicians*.
 - Membership was 5,406.

1967:

- This is the 25th anniversary, and the *Journal* got a new cover.

1968:

- The first membership survey was conducted to determine members' attitude toward the association.
 - Membership was 5,851

1969:

- Joyce N. Benoit Goldstein is elected president.
- The name of the journal was changed to *Occupational Health Nursing*.
- An extensive industrial health library was established at AAIN headquarters.
- The Board of Directors made recommendations for the Founders Board for certification.
- Graduate programs in occupational health nursing are initiated.
- ICOH's Scientific Committee on Occupational Health Nursing (SCOHN) formed.
- 330 industrial nurses were certified in audiometric testing, and the Committee on Audiometric Testing was assigned to help chapters conduct the certification course.
 - Membership was at 6,063.
 - Dorothy Sallar became the Executive Director.

The Seventies

Nixon, Watergate, OSHA & NIOSH, Frozen Wages and High Interest Rates

1970:

- *Briefings* became the *AAIN Briefs* and became a regular monthly publication.

1971:

- The landmark OSHA Act was reviewed in the *Occupational Health Nursing* journal.
- Patricia E. O'Brien was elected AAIN president.
 - A Director of Education was hired.
- *The American Board for Occupational Health Nurses (ABOHN) formed as a separate entity to certify occupational health nurses. Today over 12,000 OHNs are certified and actively working.*

1972:

- Membership is at 6,450 with 83 local, 23 state and two regional chapters.

1973:

- A resolution was passed supporting certification and opposing institutional licensure.

- Hazel L. Gallaher became the new president.

1974:

- AAIN recommended that constituencies planning continuing education gain approval for their offerings from an accrediting body.
- AAIN began sponsoring 2-4 day continuing education seminars at universities
- *The first certification examination was given by ABOHN in Bal Harbour, Florida.*

1975:

- Sue A. Bill is elected president.

1977:

- Having been approved in 1975, the organization changed its logo and name to become the American Association of Occupational Health Nurses (AAOHN), Inc.
- Virginia L. Carlson became president.
- *NIOSH provided a grant to the University of Cincinnati College of Nursing and Health to establish a graduate program in occupational health nursing. This was the precursor of the Education and Research Centers (ERCs), many of whom provide a masters and doctorate curriculum in occupational health nursing.*

1978:

- *Wausau Insurance Company funded the Joanna Johnson Endowed Chair in Occupational Health Nursing at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee.*

1979:

- Dorothy Mae E. Clark was elected president.
- The AAIN Journal became Occupational Health Nursing.
 - Membership was approximately 9,500.
 - Computers came to the AAOHN Headquarters.

The Eighties

Prince Charles & Dianne married, AIDS, the Regan Assassination Attempt, Bopal/Chernobyl/Exxon Valdez

1980:

- The *AAOHN Newsletter* was published monthly.
- The first Government Affairs Program began and the AAOHN President and Executive Director attended a White House Briefing for the first time.
 - Metilda Babbitz became the Executive Director of AAOHN and began to hire professional staff to implement policies and programs.

1981:

- Mary Seaver became the president.

1983:

- Headquarters offices were moved from New York City to Atlanta, Georgia.

1984:

- 22,890 occupational health nurses were employed in the United States.

1985:

- Elisabeth M. Bodnar became president.
- AAOHN began publishing six independent study modules, called *Updates to Occupational Health Nursing* with 26 lessons/each and a quiz for which 1.0 CNE could be earned.
- *ABOHN established reciprocity with Canada for certification recognition.*

1986:

- Based on AAOHN's lobbying, OSHA added OHNs the definition of health professionals in the hazard standard.

1987:

- Geraldine Williamson became editor of *Occupational Health Nursing*.

1988:

- *Occupational Health Nursing* became the *AAOHN Journal*.
- AAOHN became a provider of continuing education via ANA.
- Began publishing Position Papers on practice issues and Advisories that related to current events, new regulations and products. These publications continue to be reviewed and revised and re-issued today, along with new ones, all available online since 1997.

- Held the first International Symposium on Occupational Health in the US.

1989:

- Sharon Muckenfuss took office as President.
- Five-year planning strategic planning for the organization was begun.
- The first Mayrose Snyder Excellence in Occupational Health Nursing award given to Georgia Knuth at the 1989 American Occupational Health Conference in Boston.
- Membership was approximately 11,000 and 2,600 people attended the Conference.

The Nineties

Fall of the Soviet Union, Desert Storm, Clinton Administration, Imperial Foods (chicken processing) Fire, ADA

1992:

- Annette Haag became president.
- Ann Cox become Executive Director.
- There were approximately 13,000 members and 185 constituent associations.

1993:

- *OSHA established the Office of Occupational Health Nursing staffed by Patricia Bertsche and Elise Handelman.*

1994:

- Began offering monthly continuing education modules in the *AAOHN Journal*.
- Became an approver and provider of continuing education for OHNs from the American National Accrediting Center.
- Published the first Membership Directory, now available online.

1995:

- Bonnie Rogers became president.
- AAOHN conducted and published its first *Compensation and Benefits Study*.
 - Membership exceeded 13,000 for the first time.
- *ABOHN established a two-credential program, COHN and COHN-Specialist (COHN-S).*

1996:

- Pamela V. Moore was appointed managing editor of the *AAOHN Journal*.
- AAOHN, along with ACOEM, AIHA, ASSE and the National Society of Professional Engineers began meeting annually in an Intersociety Forum.

- Awarded two Governmental Affairs, a Public Service and a Business Excellence Chapters Award for the first time.
- Obtained the first federally-funded grant from the Agency for Toxic Substances & Diseases Registry to develop educational materials for OHNs and the community. Renewed in 2000 to build capacity to conduct environmental education activities.

1997:

- The first edition of *AAOHN Core Curriculum for Occupational Health Nursing* and its companion *Study Guide* were published; the editor was Dr. Mary Salazar.
- AAOHN published www.aohn.org with continual updates until today.
- *A Multistate Practice Position Statement* issued and revised in 2005.

1998:

- The AAOHN Foundation is established as a 501(c)3.
- AAOHN changed the name of occupational health nursing to Occupational and Environmental Health Nursing, but did not change the name of the association and determined that the nurse would continue as occupational health nurse or OHN.
- *Two Success Tools: Measuring & Articulating Value* and *Developing Business Expertise* (1999) were published.
- With a federal grant, co-hosted the first International Conference on Global Occupational Health Nursing in Eastbourne, UK with the Royal College of Nursing Society of Occupational Health Nursing.
- *ABOHN created the Case Management (CM) credential.*

1999:

- Deborah V. DiBenedetto became president.
- First class of AAOHN Fellows was inducted including all former AAIN and AAOHN presidents plus three nominated members, Jane Parker-Conrad, Susan Randolph, and Suzanne Smith.
- AAOHN defined Competencies in nine categories of occupational health nursing practice, delineated in three levels. These remain today, updated approximately every three to five years.
- APRNs began to enter the specialty. *APRN Position Statement* published.
- Won case after representatives testified in US Court of Appeals, challenging OSHA's rule that only allowed physicians to conduct medically necessary evaluations for workers who required respiratory protection.

The 21st Century

Y2K, Destruction of the World Trade Center, the Internet and Globalization, ADAAA

2001:

- The second edition of *AAOHN Core Curriculum for Occupational Health Nursing and Study Guide* were published with Dr. Mary Salazar as editor.

2002:

- Pamela V. Moore became editor of the *AAOHN Journal*; the journal cover is updated.
 - AAOHN Board adopted the Carver Policy Governance Model allowing them to focus on larger issues, to delegate with clarity, to control management's job without meddling, to rigorously evaluate the accomplishment of the organization; and to truly lead its organization governance.

2003:

- Susan Randolph became president.
- The OSHA Alliance was established.
- From 2003-2007, multiple publications, called *Foundation Building Blocks* were developed to support members' practice. These became online learning modules with CNE in 2006.
 - Members voted for officers, electronically or by phone for the first time.

2004:

- Joy E. Wachs became the fourth editor of the *AAOHN Journal*.
- AAOHN began designating Occupational Health Nursing Week with materials to support members' advocacy for OHNs and an essay contest.

2005:

- The third edition of *AAOHN Core Curriculum for Occupational Health Nursing and Study Guide* were published with Dr. Mary Salazar as editor.
- AAOHN conducted its first Annual Symposium & Expo independent of AOHC.

2006:

- AAOHN began offering hour-long continuing education webcasts on occupational health topics, during lunchtime, ET and providing 1.0 CNE
- The *AAOHN Journal* cover was updated.
- The American Red Cross Alliance was established.
- The NIOSH Partnership agreement signed.

Beginning of Global Economic Recession

2007:

- Richard Kowalski was elected as president.
- Members-only sections of the website were created.

2008:

- AAOHN became an ANA Affiliate

2009:

- Kay Campbell assumed the office president.
- The AAOHN News went online.
 - AAOHN was insolvent. Rather than declare bankruptcy, the Association closed headquarters in Atlanta, moved to Pensacola, Florida, and began to be managed by Dancy and Associates. The governance model transitioned back to a member-driven organization and the Board of Directors surveyed members and re-envisioned the organization to better meet the needs of members.

Second Decade on 21st Century

President Obama, BP Deep Horizon, Sandy Hook Elementary School Shootings, Boston Marathon Attack, Affordable Care Act

2010:

- Approximately 19,000 occupational health nurses in the US. This is a 24% decrease between 1980 and 2004 based on the Health Resources and Services Administration, Bureau of Health Professions data.

2011:

- Catherine Pepler became president.
- *AAOHN Journal* became *Workplace Health & Safety* to attract more interprofessional authors and readers and better describe the content of the journal.
- The annual AAOHN Conference in Atlanta was preceded by the first Global Summit, held at the Carter Center and partially funded by a NIOSH grant.
- Annette Haag was honored with the first Lillian G. Carter Humanitarian Award.
- AAOHN established Twitter and Facebook accounts and launched into social media.
- The first virtual Chapter Leader Educational Meeting was held.
 - AAOHN was once again financially solvent.

2012:

- The April issue of *Workplace Health & Safety* was devoted to foundations of occupational health nursing autonomy, quality practice, education, ethics/professionalism and clinical practice.
- AAOHN received a NIOSH grant to develop education and resources in respiratory protection with an inter-organizational advisory board.
- *Workplace Health & Safety* began the regular publication of international occupational health nursing manuscripts.
 - Kay Campbell became the first nurse Executive Director of AAOHN since reorganization in 2009.
 - An online membership survey was conducted with results published in four installments in *Workplace Health & Safety*
 - Another survey was done to assess occupational health nurses' educational preparation, roles, responsibilities, and training needs in respiratory protection

2013:

- Pam Carter became president.
- A new *Compensation & Benefits Report* was published, based on a member survey.
- Launched an AAOHN Certificate Course and a DOT Medical Examiners Training.
- An International Membership became available.
 - A new membership campaign was launched with chapters, followed by another initiative with Boards of Nursing in the following year.
 - Membership was surveyed to explore OHNs' current use of the Internet and social media.

2014:

- The fourth edition of *AAOHN Core Curriculum: Fundamentals of Occupational and Environmental Health Nursing* was published; editors were Drs. Pamela and Roy Moore.
- Released the first online, self-paced educational product, *The Respiratory Protection Education & Resources Webkit for Occupational Health Nurses* and received a second NIOSH grant to develop competencies and educational materials about respiratory protection for all healthcare workers.
- Received a grant to develop its second online, self-paced continuing educational program on sleep and worker productivity.
- Held its second Global Summit in tandem with the Annual Conference in Dallas, TX, along with the midterm meeting of the Scientific Committee on Occupational Health Nursing (SCOHN, ICOH).
- AAOHN became a NIOSH Total Worker Health™ Affiliate

2015:

- Jeannie Tomlinson will became President. In addition the Board is comprised of a President Elect, Secretary, and two Directors each from five regions. Four Board committees, and 10 member committees and seven project teams govern the association.
- Membership is 4,800 with 117 constituents organizations, including 30 state, 86 local and one regional chapter. The *Leadership Link Newsletter*, the online Chapter Leader Resources and virtual Town Halls are primary communications with chapters. A three-session, live, online Chapter Leadership Series was held.
- *Workplace Health & Safety's* publisher changed to SAGE and received a new cover.
- Education remains the hallmark of member services with the AAOHN Academy providing fifteen live and over 60 on-demand continuing education webcasts and an online CNE Journal Module each month.
- The monthly *AAOHN Newsletter*, weekly “eblasts”, www.aaohn.org, Twitter and Facebook offer member communications. The website houses a link to current and back issues of *Workplace Health & Safety*; guiding documents, e.g., Standards, Position Statements, Competencies, Code of Ethics and other practice document; information and registration for the Conference and the Academy’s educational offerings; a Marketplace; an Employment Information Service; a member discussion forum; current occupational health and safety news; membership renewal and other services.

2016:

- AAOHN hires Smithbucklin as its management company
- Kaye Englebrecht assumes executive director role

2017:

- Mary Gene Ryan became President

2019:

- Barb Maxwell elected as President
- 4,17 members
- Goal continues to grow organizational membership and mentorship program
- Collaborated with committee to redefine new “certificate” OHN course program
- Change in composition in numbers of board of directors needed per region to reflect actual work accomplished

- Revised and published AAOHN Core Curriculum for Occupational Health Nursing and Study Guide
- Tales of OHN marketing campaign for membership recruitment
- Restructuring National, Regional, State and Local Chapters incorporation status
 - Members has a choice of membership levels to join
 - Can join at any level
 - Benefits differ at each level
- Redesigned Corporate memberships

2020:

- Barb Maxwell is President
 - Known as the “COVID” President
- 3,531 members
- Led our organization through a national pandemic “COVID”
- Forced to cancel Conference due to COVID
- Started development for an AAOHN certification course content and practice test products
- Provided free member webinars focused on COVID, Mental Health
- AAOHN Offered the first Virtual program – Education Week (10 sessions from the cancelled conference)
- Outreach between Canadian OHN organizations and free webinar access
- AAOHN Masks for Worker Safety Campaign

2021:

- Kim Olszewski is president
- 3,297 members
- Pivoted to virtual Annual Conference due to COVID
- Continued to offer additional free webinars related to COVID: Vaccine Hesitancy and Long Haul Covid Management
- Joined ANA COVID and Vaccines Groups
- Started OHN as a Second Career Campaign
- Developed Leadership education with a 7-part Webinar series

2022:

- Kim Olszewski is president
- 3,550 members
- Launched new website
- Launched new podcast series “Occupational Health Nursing Pulse”
- Released 5th edition of Core Curriculum
- Held virtual Annual Conference

- Kristin Tamkus assumes executive director role

2023:

- Yolanda Lang is President
- 3,265 members
- Reduced number of regions from five to three
- Instituted revised Willingness to Serve and Committee assignment process; including assignment two board liaisons to each committee
- Offered revised, in-person Conference of Leaders workshop
- Offered in-person COHN/COHN-S Review Course
- Held first in-person Annual Conference post COVID
- Launched the AAOHN Online Game
- Restructured Leadership Success Committee
- Revised Award offerings and updated both award and Fellowship applications
- Approved a new policy review process
- Signed MOU with RMCOEH

2024:

- Yolanda Lang is President
- Approved new WH&S Editor, Bonnie Rogers
- Exhibited at AANP