Hello

I am the Occupational Health Nurse Manager, currently located in Health Services the building on the pond across from the Student Life Center.

I am sure you are all ready to escape after a long day packed with information. I promise I will keep within the time allotted. If you have questions as we go along, please feel free to ask at the time. I don’t mind.

My prime role as occupational health nurse is to manage disability or sick leave absences. However, included in that portfolio is a host of other things; some of which may provide you with assistance in your role.

My topic today is: **Wellness: Physical and Psychological Health in the Workplace**: What does a psychologically healthy and safe workplace mean? The University of Waterloo supports and promotes employees’ psychological well-being and actively works to prevent harm to employee psychological health due to negligent, reckless or intentional acts.

While psychological health and safety are deserving of equal protection, it is important to note that from a strategic perspective, ensuring safety (in the sense of preventing psychological harm) is a prerequisite to the promotion of health.

**Psychological health** comprises our ability to think, feel and behave in a manner that enables us to perform effectively in our work environments, our personal lives, and in society at large. **Psychological safety** is different - it deals with the risk of injury to psychological well-being that an employee might experience. **Improving the psychological safety of a work setting involves taking precautions to avert injury or danger to employee psychological health.**

The workplace can be seen to have a crucial role in at least protecting, and possibly promoting:

1. **Dignity and respect** for the person (serving basic needs for the sense of self-worth and self-esteem)

2. **Security, integrity and autonomy** of the person (serving the need to feel safe both physically and psychologically)

3. **Organizational justice** (serving the need to feel that one belongs to a community in which there is respect for due process and fair procedures)

Katrina Di Gravio and I are the champions of this process for the university and if at any time you have concerns/questions please do not hesitate to contact us.

We are aware that working with faculty as Chair/Director, you are not always aware of colleagues’ absences. However, if your practice in your department is one of an open climate,
where you encourage colleague dialogue and/or touch base with your faculty members on a regular basis, you have already created an intro for if/when you hear about a colleague who may be missing time or who may not be themselves. This has established a relationship for you to ask that person if everything is okay. I understand it is hard in your role with faculty to always tell who is present, or who is having difficulties. If you are concerned and/or if the member mentions they are having difficulties, you can always refer them to OH.

If you receive medical from an employee, please forward it to Occupational Health and then shred your copy. Medical is confidential and must not be retained by any manager, chair/director or dean. If one thinks about it, medical could end up in a professional file kept in your office. But, in the future, with a change of management, the medical documentation remains. The medical (by this time out of context) could be misconstrued and be held against a colleague years later.

It is important for faculty to understand that if one becomes ill during a term, it does not matter whether it is a non-teach term, a regular teaching term or sabbatical. It must be reported to Occupational Health. We will support the employee and advise on how to handle their medical needs. Should an employee continue off and proceed to Long Term Disability, we will help them with that process as well. LTD does not automatically mean the employee will never return to the workplace. In fact, many of our LTD clients find they access LTD for short periods of time-some as little as days. Faculty also have a distinct advantage in the return to work process especially when a gradual return is necessary. A gradual return to full duties often happens over a term as opposed to staff who will be expected to return to full duties within a 6-8 week period. I also have a hard copy of the University’s Disability Management Guide—it can also be found on the Human Resources website.

In your role, it is important to remember that there are two kinds of illnesses. There is the visible illness (usually physical) and the invisible (possibly psychological but maybe it could be migraines, IBS, surgery, diabetes etc.). Both need to be treated equally. When aware, OH will request and receive verifiable medical to support any ongoing absences and advise you. OH understands that it is very difficult for departments planning process to not know when one’s colleague might return to work post absence. We rely on the medical from the doctor to inform us and then advise you of impending returns. We are also aware of your need to schedule and the time frame needed for this. We are always willing to speak with you to hear your particular concerns and see what if anything we can do to help.

Regarding accommodation requests: Are we expected to accommodate an employee’s request? Yes, the Human Rights Code says that all organizations have an obligation to accommodate to the point of undue hardship. You can imagine that when reviewed, most accommodation requests would be viewed as possible in an organization of this size. It would be unfair to exclude someone from the workplace or activities in the workplace because their needs are different from the majority.
The principle of accommodation applies to all grounds of the Human Rights Code, but accommodation issues in employment most often relate to the needs of:

- employees with disabilities (disability)
- older workers (age)
- employees with religious needs (creed)
- pregnant women (sex)
- employees with caregiving responsibilities (family status).

The right to be accommodated and the duties of the employer and union are now well-established in statute and case law. Accommodation is a fundamental and integral part of the right to equal treatment.

The principle of accommodation involves three factors:

1. **Dignity**: Persons must be accommodated in a way that most respects their dignity, including their privacy, confidentiality, comfort and autonomy.

2. **Individualization**: There is no set formula for accommodation. Each person’s needs are unique and must be considered afresh when an accommodation request is made. A solution may meet one person’s requirements but not another’s, although many accommodations will benefit many other people with similar needs.

3. **Inclusion**: Achieving integration and full participation requires barrier-free and inclusive design and removing existing barriers. Preventing and removing barriers means all persons should have access to their environment and face the same duties and requirements with dignity and without impediment.

The most appropriate accommodation must be identified and implemented short of undue hardship.

If one of your faculty requires a medical accommodation, you would direct the person to Occupational Health. Medical is required to support accommodations. This could involve someone requiring special travel conditions i.e. special seating for flights, reduction in course load, reduced service involvement or support for decreased research productivity in both quantity and quality. When there is medical to support one or all of these, we will, with appropriate medical, advise the appropriate person, in this case, the Dean. If the accommodation is to support scheduling, we will advise the Chair. Scheduling might be a request about start times and/or end times. An example is that someone may have medical to support an accommodation for a later start time i.e. noon. Can you assign evening classes
because they require a later start? Perhaps you are unable to enforce, but it does not preclude you asking the faculty member if they are able to do an evening class. If they say no, then you are not able to put them in an evening slot. However, you might find that they are agreeable because of their medical request to begin later that they are willing to take an evening class. Please note that if someone wishes to have a specific teach time in order to have better travel times from out of town, this is not an OH issue—it is not medical. Are there any questions about this?

As of September 1, 2016, the university engaged an Employee Family Assistance Provider also known as our EFAP provider. This is a free benefit for all employees, spouses/partners and dependents who are covered under the employees’ health benefits. Our provider is Homewood Health. I have a pamphlet which provides information about his service and the 1-800 number which can be accessed 24/7 to book an appointment. It is completely confidential. Please note, our on campus Counselling is for our students only.

We do recommend that in your new role, it is helpful to find a mentor for support. It may be that as the Chair/Director, you could need help but yet fear asking for assistance fearing that it will be interpreted as you can’t cope. You are aware that at some point you will return to being a colleague; and you don’t want your chair/director actions held against you in future. There are many things that can happen which provide you with stress and anxiety in your role. An example may be performance issues you are required to deal with. Remember that the EFAP program is also there to support you. Faculty Advisor, Glenda Rutledge is also an excellent resource for guidance through difficult situations. Another tip that was provided to me to share with you was as a Chair/Director it is a good thing to occasionally ask your department faculty for help with a project or their opinion on a specific matter. It works well to help build relationships—providing members of your department with a sense of contribution and feeling of inclusivity.

Bullying is a definite problem in any organization and we are not unique, it can happen here at Waterloo. It can be very isolating if you are subject to this type of behavior whether it is you as the Chair/Director, Associate Chair and/or Associate Dean or whether it is a faculty member. Remember witnessing bullying and doing nothing is as bad as being the actual bully. Again there are resources across campus to help you or at the very least direct you to the proper resource.

The university now has a Healthy Workplace committee and there will be upcoming events which will benefit everyone. The faculty representative is Craig Hardiman from Classical Studies. He is located in ML 229 and can be reached at ext. 37505 if you wish to contribute ideas which could benefit our workplace.

If you are looking for a family doctor, I have a handout which shows you how to apply for one in this region. There is also a pamphlet showing some of the other services offered through Occupational Health.
Health Services is available as a First Aid treatment center for employees. A clinic nurse will assess the employee who is injured or has an urgent illness while at work. The nurse will arrange treatment and evaluation by a physician if necessary. Unfortunately we are unable to act as the family physician.

Health Services can provide routine allergy shots or prescription injections (with the permission of employee’s physician). I have the form available today should you require it. Flu immunization is offered on campus each fall and is advertised on the Daily Bulletin. Health Services will also offer flu injections prior to the flu clinics for high risk individuals as well. Health Services also offers a Travel Immunization Clinic through booked appointments. Very handy if travel is required as part of your departments mandate.

Are there any questions? Thank you for your patience. I trust you have learned some small nugget that will help you in your new role. Remember Occupational Health is there for you and your faculty members. If it isn’t us you need, we will help you find the correct place. Congratulations and good luck.