WEBSITE REVIEW

Drugscope

www.drugscope.org.uk

Developers and sponsors

There is increasing pressure for organizations to demonstrate that they take the issues of workplace health and safety seriously. The cost to industry of drug misuse is estimated as £800 million each year and studies have shown that employees who use drugs have ~60% higher rates of absenteeism and a 47% higher rate of involuntary termination than other workers. It is an area of relevance to occupational physicians; occupational health departments may be asked to participate in or oversee a drug-testing programme particularly if there is a statutory requirement. Others may have to evaluate individuals with a recognized drug problem, to determine fitness for work or assist an employer with developing a robust, ethical policy should they be thinking of introducing a testing programme.

Drugscope is a non-governmental organization in Special Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations. It promotes itself as the UK’s leading independent centre of expertise on drugs. It is a registered charity with the stated aim of being able to inform policy development and reduce drug-related risk by providing quality drug information, promoting effective responses to drug taking, advising on policy-making and undertaking research at local, national and international levels.

Purpose

There is a clear statement on the website outlining the role and purpose of the organization. The organization is not dedicated to workplace or employment issues per se but instead encompasses a wide variety of drug issues including treatment and education, advisory, quality and effectiveness and specialist interest groups. The organization has 14 board members with a further dedicated staff of 20 individuals. Disappointingly there are no biographies of the board members, so it is impossible to determine their credentials.

Content

There is a vast amount of information available free of charge. Most useful material is generally contained in an extensive library and a simple keyword search using ‘workplace’ or ‘employment’ brings up a number of articles ranging from the entire Joseph Rowntree Foundation Independent Inquiry into Drug Testing at Work publication to more esoteric articles. There are also links to detailed reading lists with accompanying brief abstracts and this material can be accessed from the DrugScope Information and Library service. The website is constantly updated and a recent addition of a weekly blog keeps up to date with changes and developments in drug-related issues.

The latest books and reports page has bulletins, which are updated on a monthly basis, and there are links to new books and grey literature, as they become available.

An extensive drug search encyclopaedia is also available and regularly reviewed.

Confidentiality

There is no requirement to register for the site, as much information is available in the public domain with no associated charge. There is, however, an associated members’ section costing £60 per annum. This entitles members to receive the Druglink journal, access archives and obtain discounts on material and literature.

Overall

The website is of interest to occupational physicians in all employment arenas. It provides a useful starting point for occupational physicians faced with policy development or implementation of a drug-testing programme.

For occupational physicians already familiar with workplace drug testing, the site provides detailed, reliable and current information on drugs of abuse, statistics and policy developments.

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