LETTER FROM DUBAI.....

It's a long way from Canterbury to Dubai (as a variant of the popular ditty goes). But David Snashall (*OEM* Editorial Board member) and I made the trip there last month to run a two day course on occupational health. We had hoped that the location of the meeting would be the renowned 7-star Burj-al-Arab hotel, but the all-suite, sailing boat shaped, heliport equipped, luxury venue was some distance away from our more modest conference facilities. Still, the event was a success. We had participants from Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, UAE, Kuwait, and several other Gulf states. The disciplines represented included occupational health nursing, hygiene, medicine, and management. There was good interaction between the course tutors and the

audience, with information provided that showed the range of skills, experience, and expertise within the group. What did we achieve? Course participants said they benefited from the opportunity to ask, debate, and respond. We managed to exchange views, establish a network of occupational health professionals in that region, and tested the system for future occupational courses according to the format used.

But of course it was not all just work. David and I took the opportunity to visit the Gold Souk—a bustling bazaar of shops selling items of gold. But as I did not have the

competence to distinguish gold from other non-precious metals, I inspected, assessed, and did not purchase. Although we did wonder about the occupational hazards of making gold ornaments—right from getting the ore out from the ground, to the craftsmen completing the intricate patterns on the gold chains and locket. The Spice Souk was a similar marketplace stocked with spices from countries in the Middle East and afar. There was saffron at a tenth of the UK price, and gold, frankincense, and myrrh—all in one place. Dubai is a shoppers' paradise, and a popular place to visit for residents from the Gulf states. Hence, our course participants unanimously voted it as the region's venue of choice for future occupational health courses or conferences.

I could not leave Dubai without having seen the Burj-al-Arab, so when there was an opportunity for a guided tour of this fabulous hotel, we booked a place. It was truly a magnificent building—with a huge atrium, a floor to ceiling glass aquarium with colourful fish, a "dancing" fountain that spouted water several storeys high, and several restaurants. The seafood restaurant was chosen for a modest meal after the tour. Getting to the restaurant was by means of a simulated submarine ride. And of course we focused our minds on the occupational health aspects of underwater exploration, and the hazards involved in the task of constructing the world's top hotel.

So, it's back to reality to occupational health in Canterbury, and wishful thinking of possible occupational health projects in exotic far flung places.

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The Burj-al-Arab hotel, Dubai (photograph courtesy of W S Atkins Property Design).

The Burj-al-Arab hotel, Dubai (photograph courtesy of David Snashall).

OEM web submission and review system

I am pleased to inform authors and reviewers of the new online submission and review system at *OEM*. Developed by Highwire Press (CA, USA), *Bench>Press* is a fully integrated electronic system which uses the internet to allow rapid and efficient submission of manuscripts. It also allows the peer review process to be conducted entirely online. The main aim is to speed up the frequently frustrating progress from submission to publication.

Authors can submit their manuscript in any standard word processing software. Standard graphic formats accepted include: .jpg, .tiff, .gif, eps, etc. (Please note: multi page powerpoint files are not accepted by the BMJ Publishing Group.) The text and graphic files are automatically converted to PDF for ease of distribution and reviewing purposes. Authors are asked to approve their submission before it formally enters the reviewing process. On approval, the submission is passed to the editor and/or reviewers via the web. All transactions are secure.

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We are very excited with this new development and would encourage authors and reviewers to use the system where possible. It really is simple to use and should greatly improve on the current peer review process. Full instructions can be found on *Bench>Press* <http://submit-oem.bmjournals.com> and *OEM online* at <http://www.occenvmed.com>. Please contact Natalie Davies, Project Manager, ndavies@bmjgroup.com.

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