The role of the GP in keeping people in work

We agree with the conclusions drawn by Morrison [1] as to what needs to happen to support people in or to work after illness or injury; it requires greater cooperation and closer working between general practitioners (GPs), occupational health specialists and employers. In fact, this conclusion was also agreed in consensus reached between the Presidents of the Society and Faculty of Occupational Medicine, Chair of Council of the Royal College of General Practitioners and also leaders from employers, unions, insurers and government in 2003 [2].

In 2002, Beaumont and Quinlan [3] prompted that occupational physicians should assert their central role in rehabilitation. Gunnyeon [4] went further and in response to the opportunities arising from Dame Carol Black’s Review issued a call to action; ‘Is occupational medicine ready to seize the moment and in doing so create for itself a stimulating and secure future?’

On 30 March 2011, in Wellington, New Zealand, Dame Carol Black launched the ‘Australian and New Zealand Consensus Statements on the Health Benefits of Work’. This was an initiative led by the Australasian Faculty of Occupational and Environmental Medicine, with signatories from health professionals, employers, unions, workers groups, insurers, government and a wide range of other stakeholders. Speakers included the President of the Faculty, President of the Royal NZ College of GPs, President of the NZ Council of Trade Unions and a government Minister.

To achieve the positive benefits of work on health is going to require a paradigm shift in thinking and practice for many of the people involved, not least GPs. The Australasian Faculty will continue to engage with GPs and other stakeholders to facilitate this. Further information is at http://www.racp.edu.au/page/afouem-health-benefits-of-work.

David Beaumont

e-mail: doctor@fitforwork.co.nz

References