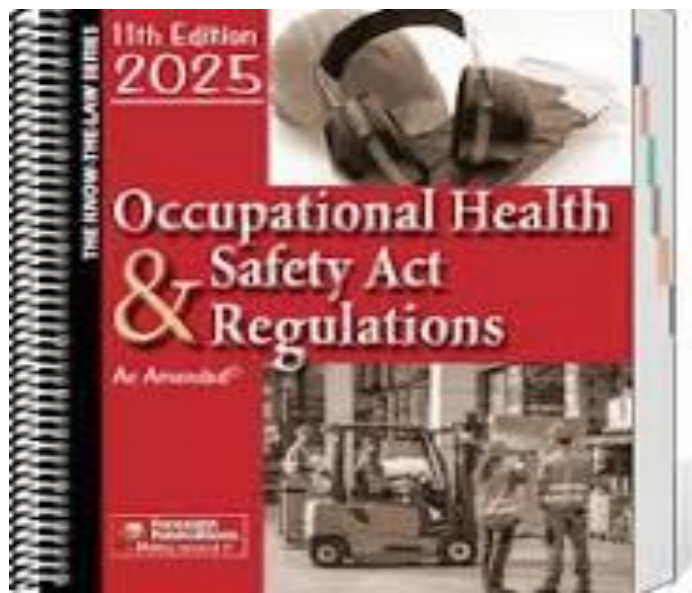




MEDICAL SURVEILLANCE – REQUIREMENTS OF NOISE EXPOSURE REGULATIONS (NER)

Dr RV George
OMP
Member of Technical Committee

April 2025

Prevalence of NIHL

- ❖ **Study by University of PTA – revealed a prevalence of 26 -80% in workers involved in drilling operations**
- ❖ **Study by University of Witwatersrand on Paper Mill in KZN revealed a prevalence of 21%**
- ❖ **Of the compensated ODs, NIHL, a result of exposure to unprotected excessive noise levels, had the highest incidence in proportion to other diseases for the reporting periods, 2001 to 2019.** Int Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health

Definition of Medical Surveillance

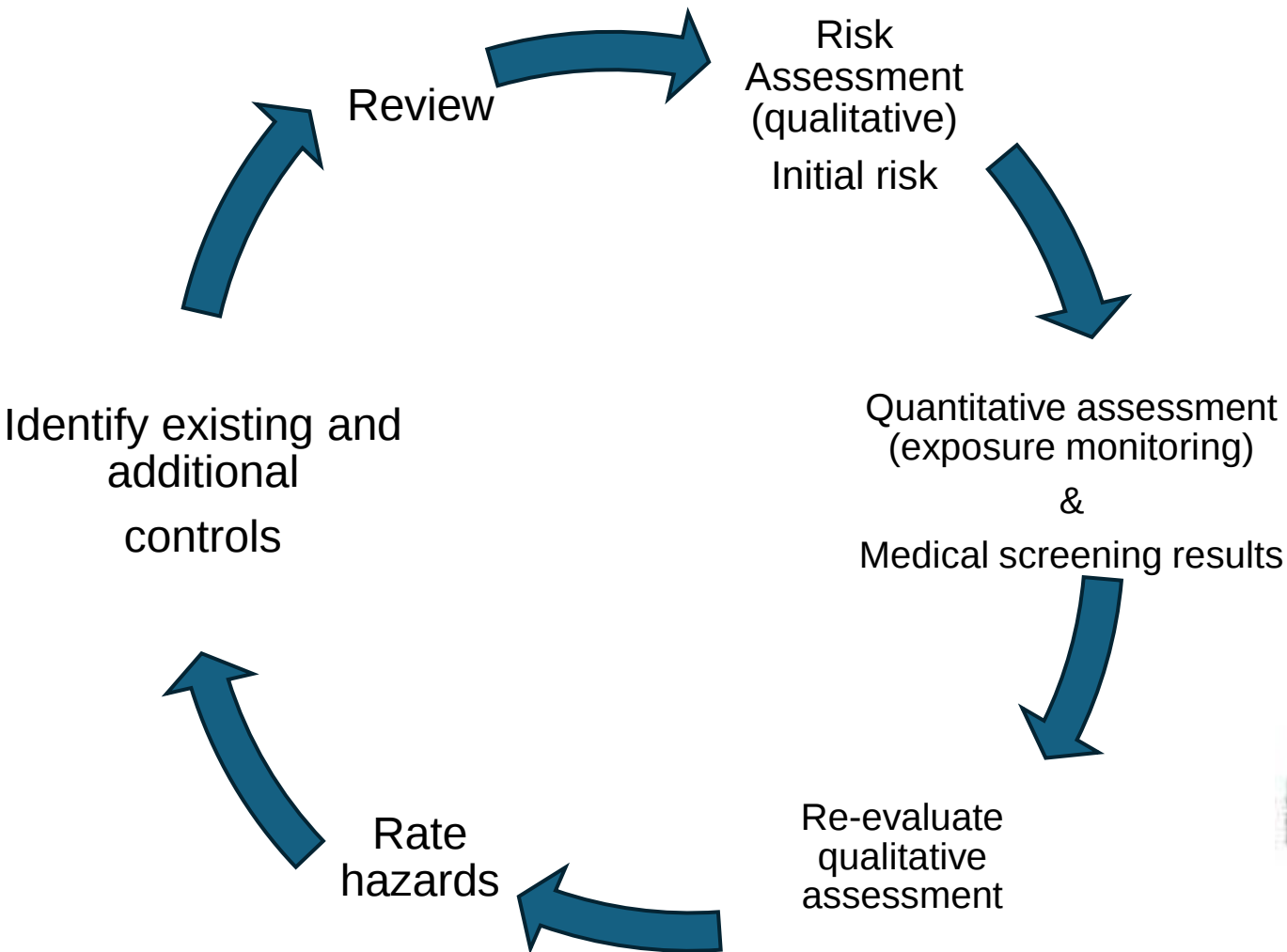
Medical surveillance is a planned, ongoing program of health assessments including clinical assessments, biological monitoring, and medical tests, to monitor the health of employees exposed to workplace hazards and determine the effectiveness of safety measures

Involves the systematic assessment of employees exposed or potentially exposed to occupational hazards

In terms of the NER:

- Hazard: Noise**
- Medical test: Audiometry**

Determining need for Medical Surveillance



Steps or Phases of the Medical Surveillance Programme

- **Data Collection**
- **Data Analysis**
- **Data Interpretation**
- **Data Dissemination**
- **Link to Action**



Purpose of Medical Surveillance

To prevent and manage occupational health risks by monitoring employees' health, identifying early signs of work-related illnesses, and evaluating the effectiveness of safety measures

Aims to detect early signs of work-related illnesses, assess the effectiveness of preventative measures, and ensure employees are fit for their roles, ultimately promoting a healthier and safer workplace.

Medical surveillance requirements in terms of the NER

Responsibility of the EMPLOYER to establish a documented medical screening programme:

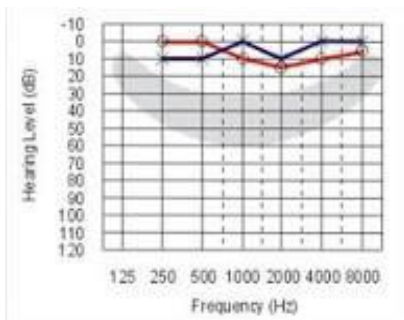
- **Overall responsibility delegated to an occupational medicine practitioner (OMP) who must oversee the medical surveillance programme**
- **Programme may be rolled out by an occupational health (nursing) practitioner (OHNP)**
- **Actual audiometry tests may be conducted by a COMPETENT PERSON:
AUDIOMETRIC TESTING**

Which employees should be subjected to audiometric screening tests?

- ☐ **Any employee who may be exposed to noise at or above either the noise-rating limit or the noise action level where there is concomitant exposure to ototoxic chemical agents and/or whole-body vibration**
- ☐ **Vulnerable employees, in which case the employer must obtain the opinion of an occupational medicine practitioner to determine whether it is necessary to conduct medical screening.**

Frequency of testing

- ✓ **Prior to starting employment in a job that will expose the employee to noise**
- ✓ **Periodically at intervals recommended by the occupational medicine practitioner, but not exceeding 24-months.**
- ✓ **Transfer between jobs**
- ✓ **At exit from employment - Provided that the most recent medical screening conducted within 6-months prior to the date of termination of employment shall be deemed to have fulfilled the requirements of an exit medical screening.**



The employer must ensure that an employee provides written informed consent for inclusion in

(a) medical screening; and

(b) medical surveillance programme.

Where the need for medical screening has been determined as necessary by the occupational medicine practitioner, the occupational medicine practitioner must specify requirements for medical screening, including–

- (a) an evaluation of an employee's medical, occupational and exposure history;**
- (b) the appropriate clinical examination and medical tests; and**
- (c) the intervals at which medical screening must be conducted, appropriate to the health risks and health status of the employee.**

Management of Results of Screening Audiometry

- ❖ **After concluding medical screening, the occupational health practitioner must ensure that the employer is informed, in writing, of the outcome of an employee's health evaluation if the outcome was normal.**
- ❖ **The occupational medicine practitioner must notify the employer in writing by means of a medical certificate of fitness, and inform the employee accordingly, when**
 - (a) an employee has a medical condition which—**
 - (i) prevents the wearing of hearing protective devices;**
 - (ii) is likely to be aggravated by the exposures at that workplace; or**
 - (b) the medical screening identifies an adverse health effect caused by exposure to noise at that workplace.**

With respect to the medical certificate of fitness, it must indicate:

- (a) the recommendations pertinent to an employee's fitness to perform the inherent requirements of the job;**
- (b) the presence of an occupational disease, without including confidential medical information;**
- (c) if any restrictions or conditions apply to any specified duties performed by the employee; and**
- (d) the period for which any restrictions or conditions, as applicable, should be applied.**

Regarding Prevention of Adverse Health Effects (NIHL)

There should be analysis of the screening results over time to identify the need for targeted exposure prevention in the workplace:

- Hierarchy of controls**
- Hearing Conservation Programme**

The employer must, as far as is reasonably practicable—

- (a) accommodate the conditions or restrictions recommended; and**
- (b) only permit an employee who has been medically certified for restricted duties to return to normal duties if the employee has been certified fit for those duties by an occupational medicine practitioner.**

QUESTIONS