

YOUR WEEKLY BULLETIN OF WIT AND WONDER



## DON'T WASTE THAT WASP!

Uses for ovipositors that had never occurred to you...



## DEMISE BY DOCTORATE

How forcing a long-serving lecturer to pursue a PhD landed Huddersfield Uni in tribunal.



## BACKHANDED COMMENT

Overcooked tennis star leads the way in calling out H&S issue in Tokyo.

## STRIPY LITTLE HEROES

We're reaching that part of the summer where we get extra guests showing up for back garden barbecues and picnics in the park.

You may not have invited them but they always cause a buzz.

Or, sometimes, screaming.

Yep. The wasps are back, lurking around your doughnuts, crawling along your hotdog buns, checking out your burgers like a Masterchef judge in a bad mood.

But WAIT before you swat them with a greasy spatula or stamp them into the grass under your flip flop - because that wasp might one day save your life.

According to the BBC Online Science pages this week, surgeons will soon be perfecting keyhole procedures on tumours, thanks to wasps.



The design of the needles which suction out tissue is being modified to work exactly like the ovipositor of a parasitoid wasp.

Unlike the sucky needles, which get clogged, the wasps' ovipositor burrows into its victims and retracts using friction - and bio-mechanics worthy of Thunderbirds/Transformers (pick according to your age group).

See the animated info video on the [BBC website](#)...

But perhaps not over lunch in the park.

## CALL OFF THE DOCTORATE

And speaking of pointed pressure brings me to the case of *Mr Jonathan Duxbury v the University of Huddersfield 2021*, in which the tribunal considered whether a lecturer had been unfairly dismissed after failing to complete his PhD.

Mr Duxbury worked for the University of Huddersfield as a senior lecturer in the Accountancy, Finance and Economics department from 2005 until his dismissal in 2020. He did not hold a PhD, though he is professionally qualified and holds a fellowship with the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants.

In 2013, the university introduced a new policy that all lecturers at Mr Duxbury's level were to have a PhD. Mr Duxbury subsequently enrolled in a doctoral

### EVENTS SEASON

# 2021

SEP 22  
Peace of Mind Members  
Seminar - Solent Hotel

SEP 28  
Peace of Mind Members  
Seminar - Virtual Event

programme, however in 2015, he began to experience increased stress at work and told his GP that he was feeling overworked. In light of this, occupational health and Mr Duxbury's line manager agreed that his doctoral work should be suspended. In 2016, this suspension ended but Mr Duxbury did not re-enrol in the doctoral programme, prompting the university to conduct an investigation. Mr Duxbury was told that he would not be provided with additional hours to complete his PhD work, despite his concerns that his contracted hours provided insufficient time for him to complete his PhD work and his other lecture duties.

After failing to continue his PhD studies, Mr Duxbury received a first written warning in 2017 and a final written warning in April 2018 with instructions to re-enrol by the end of the month. Mr Duxbury appealed this final warning, which was denied. He was again instructed to re-enrol by the end of 2018.

In October 2018, Mr Duxbury was diagnosed with work-related stress, and he also reported experiencing sleep deprivation and memory problems. Consequently, Mr Duxbury took a period of sick leave and attended counselling. He was on sick leave until 30 May 2019 when his GP reported that he may be fit for work with a phased return and adjusted work duties.

Mr Duxbury returned to work in June 2019 and was once again told he had to re-enrol in doctoral studies. He was subsequently dismissed in 2020 for failing to complete a PhD, after which he brought a claim against the university for unfair dismissal.

The Employment Tribunal (ET) upheld his claim for unfair dismissal. Judge Wade said that there were shortcomings in the disciplinary process and that the written warnings were "manifestly unfair". Requiring Mr Duxbury to hold a PhD to continue in his lecturer role was "undoubtedly a change to [Mr Duxbury's] contract of employment".

The ET said Mr Duxbury acted with integrity, and the university's response of "just enrol" to his concerns about how the additional study was affecting his health was "entirely outside the band of reasonable responses".

A remedy hearing will be arranged for a later date.

This case serves as a reminder to employers that their duty to protect the health and safety of employees extends to employees' mental health as well. Employers should be flexible and responsive to the needs of their employees and not be closed-minded to the idea of making reasonable concessions.

OCT 12  
Employment Law  
Masterclass -  
Settlement Agreements

OCT 20  
HR Hangout - Creating  
a Diversity and  
Inclusion agenda



## AND IF I DIE..?



The ultimate comeback in the workplace award has to go, this week, to Russian tennis player Daniil Medvedev.

Medvedev was forced to play at the Tokyo Olympics in scorching temperatures of over 33 degrees. Asked by the court umpire whether he was coping, he responded: "I can finish the match but I can die. If I die, are you going to be responsible?"

He's speaking, it seems, for most of the tennis players, currently wilting in the searing humidity of the Japanese summer. Novak Djokovic has joined him in lobbying for a late afternoon start time, while Spain's Paula Badosa needed to be wheeled off court after suffering heatstroke.

I applaud these professionals for calling out dangerous working conditions. I do wonder, though, where this might lead. Not everyone will get the perspective bang on...

'Janet - could you plug in the photocopier?'

'I could. And if I die..?'

'Bill - we're on a tight deadline here. Could you get those files over?'

'I could. And if I die..?'

'Sam... any chance you could run down to reception and-'

'And if I DIE?'

'YOU'LL JUST DIE, SAM! YOU'LL JUST DIE!'

What are the worst conditions you've ever worked in? We'd love to hear about it over on our Facebook page.

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