

1642c BUILDING CAPACITIES ON OSH IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES: EXPERIENCES FROM FINLAND

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Introduction The socio-economic development of any country is dependent on the health, safety and well-being of its working population. In its development collaboration projects over the years, Finland has prioritised the improvement of working conditions and thereby the prevention of occupational accidents and diseases. Occupational health and safety collaboration has taken place with East Africa in particular, but also with South-East Asian countries.

Method Collaboration began as the provision of training for OSH experts, and later evolved into either country-targeted or regional programmes for developing the OSH infrastructures of the countries. These programmes included the capacity building of the actors involved. The practical collaboration with East Africa was realised together with the OSH Inspectorates, and the Institutes of Occupational Health in the countries, in which these were available. The financial support of the Finnish Ministry for Foreign Affairs made it possible to run the programmes.

Results In 1973–2009, collaboration grew from individual training courses for OSH experts in Zambia, Tanzania and later in Kenya, to more comprehensive projects that covered legislation development, policy and strategy planning, and support for practice-oriented research, training, information dissemination, and the provision of services. In the 1980s, the ILO-run *Strengthening of Factories Inspectorates* projects introduced a wider approach to OSH activities. At the end of the 1980s an East African Regional OSH programme was carried out with follow-up symposia in 1992, 1995 and 1998. Later in 2008–2009, a regional follow-up programme on OSH was conducted in East Africa. Many of the trainees of the time were or are now in key senior positions in occupational health and safety administration or other relevant organisations, including enterprises.

Discussion Among the most important features of collaboration and the lessons learnt during this are the comprehensive content of collaboration; maximising the use of networking, internationally, nationally and locally; and ensuring the continuity of the activities. This means that a committed staff is essential. The long-term development impact of expert training and training of future OH-OSH leaders was deemed highly positive.

1642d CAPACITY BUILDING IN OSH: A VIEW FROM THE DEVELOPING COUNTRY

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Access to specialised occupational health services is low across the world. However, the problem is very acute in developing countries due to various factors. Equitable health system cannot be achieved unless the lack of basic occupational health facilities for all the working population are addressed. India is

an important and major developing country and represents the challenges in the developing countries to a great extent.

The most important OSH needs in developing countries such as India are:

1. legislation to extend OSH coverage to all sectors of working life including the unorganised sector,
2. spreading the awareness about OSH,
3. development of OSH infrastructure and OSH professionals.
4. Integration of occupational health with primary health care.

To address the increasing need of occupational health experts, capacity building is needed on a massive scale. The status of occupational health capacity in India reviewed from the available data and literature indicates huge gaps in the requirement and available capacity. The capacity established by the government has been grossly inadequate. Further, currently the services are aimed at organised sector and the huge need in unorganised sector is not being addressed.

Various nongovernmental international and national organisations have stepped in and have initiated various sensitisation, awareness and training programs with support from donors. Some of these programs have supported training of few experts from developing countries including India.

A case study of occupational health training and sensitisation of health care providers at primary level will be discussed. It is an initiative by Indian Association of Occupational Health which is a nongovernmental voluntary professional organisation of OH experts. Two of the international programs will also be discussed.

This presentation will review some of these initiatives and their outcome, the challenges faced and way forward. It will also discuss the potential role of expert associations.

1642e PROJECT-BASED TRAINING AS A TOOL TO TACKLE OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH CHALLENGES IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

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Introduction To know the prevalence of exposures and diseases at workplaces is crucial for the development of intervention strategies and healthcare planning. However, in many low and middle-income countries (LMIC) research is no priority. One reason is a lack of experts able to carry out sound epidemiological research at workplaces. One way of preparing such experts is through project-based training. We therefore implemented a project as training method in our blended learning Master in International Occupational Safety and Health (OSH).

Methods Students start by identifying their research interest based on existing worker's health problems. They develop a study protocol to assess working conditions and health at a self-selected workplace. After ethics approval, they carry out the project during the 2nd term of the program. In term 3, they learn to analyse and interpret data and develop a teaching intervention. In the final term, students write the master

thesis in form of a scientific paper. Throughout the process, they are accompanied by a tutor.

Results Since its beginning in 2012, the number of participants in the program is stable with 10–12 students/year. All of them are OSH experts with at least 2 years of experience in the field coming from eight Latin American countries. Students evaluate the project-based learning approach as positive. Of the 43 graduating students, 9 research papers were published in journals. More than half of the graduates teach students at local universities and thereby act as multipliers. Few continue to carry out research mainly due to lack of priority in their home countries.

Discussion The project-based learning approach contributes to occupational health research in Latin America. The concept might be promising also for other LMIC. However, due to the individual tutoring the program is cost intensive, publication of the results challenging and work opportunities for researchers limited.

1467 **FINANCIAL IMPACT OF MEDICAL TESTS REDUCTION FOR THE OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH DEPARTMENT OF A COMPANY IN TIMES OF CRISIS**

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Introduction Due to the severe crisis that Brazil is facing in recent years, companies have been forced to implement cost control programs trying to mitigate impact of economic recession.

Knowing that the Occupational Health Department is responsible for raising company costs due to large number of medical tests regularly requested, one way to cut down expenditures would be to revise pre-established internal protocols that vary according to job characteristics of the company.

This study shows the financial impact when removing unnecessary complementary medical tests from Tejofran's internal protocols, an outsourcing services company in Brazil, without interfering in the worker's health.

Methods Reviews were made to the company's internal protocols and, based on the medical literature, complementary tests which are not required by law and do not influence in the worker's health, were excluded. Some protocols could not be revised due to request of partner companies. The amount spent in 2016 was compared with the expenditures after the changes in 2017, considering the same costs of tests from previous years for the same group of workers to estimate the obtained savings.

Results 5029 exams were excluded, the main ones: Audiometry (32%), Electrocardiogram (14%), Electroencephalogram (14%) and Blood Sugar (14%). A reduction of R\$ 106.050,36 (58,6%) from total value incurred, comparing to previous year. This amount saved could be invested in other action plans that benefit workers like physical workplace exercise, awareness campaigns and trainings.

Conclusion This study shows that it is possible to reduce expenditures with company's Occupational Health Department without having to reduce benefits for employees and without harming the health of workers, and the department's main objective. The amount saved can be invested in action

programs aiming improvement of life quality for employees and reducing rates of work accidents, absenteeism, and fatalities, therefore reducing costs for the company.

1474 **PRACTICES IN THE RAILWAY INDUSTRY FOR ASSESSMENTS, INTERVENTION AND MANAGEMENT OF PSYCHOSOCIAL ISSUES IN SOUTH AFRICA**

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Introduction There are a number of psychosocial issues prevalent in the rail industry that influence workers' health and wellbeing. Managing psychosocial risks is a legal imperative that obliges employers to establish processes in accordance with national legislation to match task and environments to the physical and psychological capabilities of people to safeguard their health and wellbeing. Globalisation, higher workload and more pressure, increased job insecurity as well as poor work life balance contribute to these psychosocial issues.

Methods An analysis of questionnaire responses from Occupational health practitioners working in the railway industry, to describe types of assessments, various interventions and management of workers with psychosocial issues were conducted. Consideration were given to reason for consultation, follow-ups, and referrals to secondary psychological interventions where indicated.

Result The results revealed that we are lacking information that could provide insight into the magnitude of the problem that can influence policies and practices in the workplace. Effective solutions is needed for the prevention of psychosocial risks as these offer good returns in improved efficiency and productivity, better health, reduced absenteeism and lower medical costs.

Discussion It is widely acknowledged that work and life related stress is very common and has a high cost in terms of workers health, absenteeism and lower performance in the workplace. The development of effective guidelines, processes and policies is important to assist occupational health practitioners in assisting workers to get expert advice and referral at point of service to deal with psychosocial issues.

Conclusion A comprehensive approach by practitioners and new patterns of prevention is necessary to face current psychosocial issues in the workplace. It proved repeatedly that effective solutions should exist for the prevention of psychosocial issues as this offer good return in terms of reduced absenteeism, better health, improved work efficiency and productivity.

972 **RETROSPECTIVE STUDY OF THE PROFILE OF BRAZILIAN PROFESSIONAL DRIVERS RECEIVING SICK LEAVE BENEFIT**

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Introduction The health condition of professional drivers is one of the factors playing a role in assuring traffic safety. Therefore, it is essential the assessment of the profile of the drivers receiving sick leave benefits as well as the pathologies