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OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH INTERVENTION STUDIES IN ITALIAN LANGUAGE JOURNALS

Stefano Mattioli,¹ Andrea Farioli,¹ Robin Cooke,¹ Alberto Baldasseroni,² Jani Ruotsalainen,³ Donatella Placidi,⁴ Stefania Curti,¹ Gianpiero Mancini,⁵ Mauro Fierro,¹ Giuseppe Campo,⁶ Francesca Zanardi,¹ Francesco Violante¹ ¹University of Bologna, Bologna, Italy; ²CeRIMP, Florence, Italy; ³FIOH, Kuopio, Finland; ⁴University of Brescia, Brescia, Italy; ⁵AUSL, Ravenna, Italy; ⁶INAIL, Rome, Italy

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Objective To give a thorough overview of occupational health (OH) intervention studies published in Italian language journals.

Methods We systematically handsearched and reviewed reports published in Italian language peer-reviewed scientific journals (1990–2008) regarding evaluations of OH interventions meeting Cochrane Occupational Safety and Health Review Group's (OSHRG) classification criteria. In particular, we evaluated how many potentially pertinent evaluations retrieved by handsearching would not be readily identifiable by PubMed alone (using the OSHRG specific search string).

Results Handsearching retrieved 25 articles (reporting 27 evaluations), including nine not indexed in Medline. All but

one article claimed effectiveness, even though 18 (72%) did not report statistical analysis. Most studies (81%, 22/27) had a before-after design and there was only one randomised trial. Only one study assessed cost effectiveness (raw estimate). The OSHRG specific search string retrieved nine (56%) of the 16 eligible studies reported in the four Italian-language journals indexed in Medline. Among all the articles retrieved by the electronic strategy (n=537), the number needed to read to find one OH intervention study was 60.

Conclusions These findings suggest that even an optimised electronic search strategy may miss many potentially pertinent reports of OH interventions published in languages other than English. The detailed findings of this systematic review should provide a readily available guide to a portion of the scientific literature that is usually difficult to access. We encourage international colleagues to present overviews of OH intervention studies reported in other non-English languages.