A NETWORK OF OCCUPATIONAL RISK EXPERTS FOR EVALUATION OF UNUSUAL WORKPLACE HEALTH EVENTS

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Background The French Institute for Public Health Surveillance (InVS) monitors the health status of the population according to all health determinants, including occupational risks.

Since several years, we noted an increased number of unusual workplace health events notified to InVS but also to other stakeholders (occupational medicine consultations, Labour Ministry, etc.).

A network of occupational risk experts at local level was implemented by InVS with the aim to organise the evaluation and the investigation of unusual workplace health events with a prompt and consensual response.

Methods The network is composed of a Labour medical inspector, an occupational physician of the hospital consultation, and two trained epidemiologists of InVS.

The regional office of InVS coordinates the network and informs the experts when an unusual occupational health event is notified to the local health emergency platform.

A prompt telephone meeting based on first information about the event allows the experts to assess the signal, and to come to a consensual decision about its validation, and further investigations.

Results The first network was implemented in 2008 in the region of Aquitaine (South West France). Since, eight other French regions are involved.

Several signals have been analysed, mostly cancers clusters and sick building syndromes. The networks allowed to validate unusual events and to highlight relation with occupational environment. In some cases, the networks proposed some recommendations on prevention and control measures.

With several examples, the authors show how this network works, its added value and the limitations of epidemiological workplace investigations.

Conclusion The result of the experiment of this network was positive. Demonstrated added value of this network was a rational response leading to better reactivity, accuracy and efficiency when treating the signal, and potential detection of emergent problems.
Conclusions Our findings point to some possible causes of the variation and lack of transparency in disability evaluation. More formal and explicit approaches to a professional consensus informed by up-to-date research findings would increase the trust in the final judgments. Measures to reduce the unwanted variation need to be tested in further research.

**THE OCUPATIONAL HEALTH INVESTIGATION OF GRADUATE PROGRAMS IN COLOMBIA: TOPICS AND CHALLENGES**

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Objective Human talent is a major component of the coordinated action that is needed to conduct preventive efforts in Occupational Health. While a large number of graduate programs in Occupational Health have been recently created in Colombia; little is known about the knowledge that is being developed out of those programs. This study aimed to assess the contribution that recent thesis works have made to the Occupational Health field in Colombia.

Methods We attempted to identify and systematically describe by major topic, assessed risk factors, occupational health disease of interest and features of the study design all the thesis works produced during the last 8 years in accredited programs in the country.

Results We identified 466 works from 6 academic institutions. However, we could find information for only 355 of those works. Most of the studies were found to have medium quality. Most studies tried to evaluate working conditions (84.5%) and were observational field studies (70.1%); however, the employed evaluation criteria were typically missing in the reports. Also, there were a large number of reviews (18.7%). The most commonly investigated area was ergonomics (55.3%); and within that area, the most commonly analysed topic was the psychosocial risk factors and the risks associated with physical demands. Accordingly, the most attention was given to musculoskeletal disorders. The general topic with the least number of contributions was Occupational Medicine (6.7%).

Conclusions This distribution of thesis works generally corresponds with the needs of the country based on the official country’s prevalence of occupational disease. Nevertheless, we recommend that more efforts are dedicated to study vulnerable populations in the informal sector that makes up most of the working population in the country and are not subjected to follow-up safety evaluation at 12 months. Insurance safety consultants serve as field staff for this program and receive extensive training to perform machine safety audits and deliver the intervention.

Technical checklists are used to evaluate 26 different types of metal fabrication machinery. Checklist data are entered into software developed for this project. The software compiles category scores from all checklist responses into a concise report that is provided to each business.

The presentation will provide attendees with an understanding of the design, implementation, and evaluation of a computerised safety management system for metal fabrication industries. Preliminary results will be presented as a summary of baseline machine safety data collected at participating businesses during 2012–2013.

**Session: D. Exposure assessment II**

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Machine-related injuries are a persistent risk for workers in fabricated metal products manufacturing. Smaller establishments are of particular concern because these firms typically have limited access to safety and health resources. A research partnership with worker’s compensation insurers was created to develop, implement, and evaluate a program to help small (< 150 employees) metal fabrication businesses prevent machine-related injuries. The National Machine Guarding Program is a widely applicable, sustainable machine safety intervention being delivered on-site to firms throughout the US.

A fundamental objective of this intervention is to assist metalworking firms with interpretation and implementation of applicable Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) and American National Standards Institute (ANSI) standards. Beyond this, the partnership has developed methods and materials to help small businesses establish their own programs and policies within four topic areas: safety leadership, lockout/tagout, job hazard analysis, and machine safeguarding.

Each participating business will receive four on-site visits: a baseline safety evaluation, intervention delivery visits at 3-months and 6-months, and a follow-up safety evaluation at 12 months. Insurance safety consultants serve as field staff for this program and receive extensive training to perform machine safety audits and deliver the intervention.

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