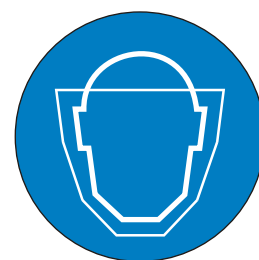


Occupational health

A manual for primary health care workers



*World Health Organization
Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean*

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A manual for primary health care workers



World Health Organization
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FOREWORD

A healthy workforce is vital for sustainable social and economic development on a global, national, and local level.

The classic approach to ensuring health and safety in the workplace has depended mainly on the enactment of legislation and inspection of workplaces to ensure compliance with health and safety standards. While this approach has been effective in controlling many specific occupational hazards since the Industrial Revolution, it has not been very effective in the past several decades, particularly in developing countries, for several reasons.

First, the development of private enterprise, resulting in a proliferation of small and medium-sized workplaces, has meant that in many instances production occurs in the workers' own homes where there can be serious health hazards, including harmful dust, chemicals, noise and heat. Inspection of such workplaces is largely impossible in view of the large numbers and wide distribution.

Second, with the introduction of new agricultural techniques, agriculture has become an industry for which systems based on inspection are inadequate. There is a need to develop other systems to protect the health of agricultural workers.

Third, occupational health problems have gradually increased in type and magnitude and have led to or aggravated diseases resulting from exposure to several risk factors, only one of which being the work environment. Examples include chronic obstructive pulmonary disease which is mainly caused by smoking but may be aggravated by irritant gases or dusts in the workplace. Low-back pain syndrome has several risk factors including rheumatic disorders, scoliosis and inappropriate posture at work.

The Declaration of Alma-Ata in 1978 led to the recognition of the importance of primary health care (PHC) workers and community health workers in bringing health care to where people live and work. PHC and community health care workers in most developing countries are not trained in the special needs of workers nor in the simple measures that can be taken to prevent or overcome and control many workers' health problems.

World Health Assembly resolution WHA 40.28 (1987) requested the Director-General of the World Health Organization "to develop guidelines on training of PHC

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