

DQ: Health workforce, practice and training

Occupational Risk Perception and occupational and work-related diseases prevention

Paula Madaleno

P Madaleno¹, A Sousa-Uva^{1,2}

¹Occupational Health, Escola Nacional de Saúde Pública, Universidade Nova de Lisboa, Lisbon, Portugal

²Comprehensive Health Research Centre, PHRC/CISP, Public Health

Research Center, Lisbon, Portugal

Contact: paulafigueiredo@me.com

Background:

It is estimated 6500 daily deaths by occupational diseases with a high social and economic impact. Several studies show that the perception of occupational risks acts as a precursor to preventive attitudes and behaviors of workers. Nevertheless, attention paid to the perception of occupational risks is scarce and even controversial. This study focuses on a model used by behavioral safety programs associating it with the psychometric paradigm, to understand the worker's risk perception of a Portuguese Health Education and Research Institution (Portugal).

Methods:

This cross-sectional study covered a total of 84 workers. Of these, 73% had a very differentiated academic background (doctorate, and post-doctorate degrees). Workers can carry out their activities in more than one work area. 60% work in Research, 49% in the Education, 42% in Laboratories and 47,6% in the General and Administrative Services. Risk perception (cognitive and emotional) was assessed using an online questionnaire that also included sociodemographic and occupational information and perception of exposure to occupational hazards.

Results:

95% of participants reported exposure to at least one occupational risk factor, but only 22% perceived the risk (probability of accidents and illnesses associated with the work performed). There was a positive correlation between the perception of exposure to occupational hazards and risk perception ($p < 0,001$) and that, the greater the perceived risk, the lower the tolerance to it ($p < 0,001$). While teaching, research and laboratory work is associated with low perception and high-risk tolerance, individual variables such as gender, age, educational qualifications, and professional category did not influence the perception of risk.

Conclusions:

Understanding how risk is perceived by workers is determinant for the effective occupational risk management.

Key messages:

- Occupational risk perception is necessary to prevention of occupational and work-related diseases.
- Occupational risk perception is determinant for the complementarity of the on-site diagnosis of real work situations and relevant for dynamization of Occupational Health services.