Occupational Health in Argentina: Challenges and Opportunities

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Argentina

- Federal Republic
- 8th largest country in the world.
- 2nd largest country in South America
- GDP 2010: US$ 425 million
- Annual Growth Rate: 7.5%

Argentina is within the denominated “new industrialised countries” with high contrasts between the urban population based on services and industry and the rural population, based on agriculture and cattle.

Legal Framework

- The first legislation on Occupational Health dates from 1915
- Occupational Health and Safety Law
  - Law N° 19.587 (1972)
- Occupational Risks Law
  - Includes:
    - Prevention
    - Health Care
    - Professional requalification
    - Worker’s compensation

The system of prevention, medical care and compensation for accidents at work, commuting (in itinere) accidents and occupational diseases has changed from being optative for employers to the compulsory hiring of private insurance companies.

Occupational diseases are listed in a closed list but remain under-reported despite the obligation placed on the employers to notify them.
Social Stakeholders and System Players

- Government
  - Superintendency of Occupational Risks (Ministry of Labour)
  - Province governments
- Workers
- Employers
- Private Occupational Risk Insurance Companies

Argentina - Data 2010 (2nd trimester)

- Population: 41 million
- Economically Active Population: 16,5 million
  - Unemployed: 1,3 million
  - Employed: 15,2 million
    - Under the Occupational Risk System: 8 million (formal workers)
    - Not covered: 7,2 million (informal workers)

The process of globalization in the 90’s and the default declared at the end of 2001 provoked high unemployment and the transfer of a lot of workers from the formal to the informal market

"Cartoneros"
Informal Cardboard Collectors

More than 8,5 million of employees and 362,000 companies have effective coverage
More than 7 million of Argentinian informal workers are not covered by the Occupational Risk System in Argentina.

Occupational Health Services for these informal workers should be implemented in Public Hospitals.

Many of these informal workers are children.

Child Labour

Programs for child protection from violence, exploitation and abuse should be improved.
In 2004 some articles of the Argentinian Occupational Risk Law have been declared unconstitutional.

Argentinian Parliament has the opportunity to enact a new Occupational Risk Law in order to reduce Labour Court Cases.

Growth in the number of Argentinian Labour Court Cases 2004-2011:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Cases</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>2,947</td>
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<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>3,878</td>
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<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>4,807</td>
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<td>2006</td>
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<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>7,719</td>
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<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>8,198</td>
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<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>9,343</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>10,704</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

44% of deaths by Occupational Accidents corresponds to Commuting Accidents.
Road and Railway Traffic Safety policies should be implemented in order to reduce the risk of dying in commuting accidents.

There are enough Occupational Health Physicians in Argentina but very few nurses.

Universities and Medical Schools should foster Occupational Health Nursing careers.

The culture of prevention is not well developed in Argentina.

Prevention Programs should be included in the kindergarten, elementary school and secondary school levels.
Special Prevention Programs should be developed for informal workers.

Argentina in the 21st Century has many challenges and opportunities in Occupational Health.

Thank you very much Muchas Gracias
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