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Occupational health for all: From research to practice

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PUBLIC HEALTH ACTIONS IN COMPANIES

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SET OF PROBLEMS

- Beyond their differences of conception related to religions or philosophical teachings, most of civilisations have always placed the protection of life and physical integrity of man among the most essential values which must be guaranteed by the society.
- Maintaining a good health condition depends certainly on each individual behaviour facing each health capital but quite as much on a collective approach appealing to a lot of public and private partnerships.



- Born in 1848 in Great Britain, public health is based nowadays, both on a better grasp of health determinants connected with ways of life (amidst them sociological and environmental factors) and on strictly biological and medical approach.
- So, it explains the necessity of getting the intervention of actors outside health sectors. Among them, it is debatable determining the place and the role of the company.



- But before developing furthermore, on one hand, it's necessary to insist on the fact that it exists a real legitimacy of the specificity of Occupational Safety and Health Insurance Systems related to the specific responsibility of employers facing the health of their employees.
- But, on the other hand, none, today, could seriously affirm that the company constitutes an hermetically closed world.



- On the contrary, it is crossed and concerned by evolutions, events and behaviours of environmental societies, the mutations of which get more and more accelerated in a context of globalization.
- It's also essential to remind that various aspects of public health difficulties can head to direct or indirect consequences on upon individual or collective levels (cost overrun because of really occupational accidents at work but which are arisen or favoured owing to the fact of behaviours outside the companies activities). These facts provoke supplementary compulsory contributions and onerous temporary work in case of absenteeism or late delivery of goods.

- This question will be more and more crucial because of the phenomenon of ageing of workers and its impact on the extension of working age.
- Accompanying seniors with an aim of sustainable work must be completed by a better preparation of the health of the population on its non occupational side.



- **However, unlike captive audiences (children at school, retired people) labour forces are comparatively not very concerned by promoting health actions apart from TV campaign the impact of which is uncertain.**



1. THE NEED FOR RECONCILIATION BETWEEN PUBLIC HEALTH AND THE COMPANY IS INDISPENSABLE BUT IS TRUE THAT CONCRETE MEASURES UNDERTAKEN ARE STILL LIMITED ALTHOUGH PROGRESSING

- Of course, none is ignorant, neither of the fight against physical inactivity organized on a large scale in Asia, nor of the achievements of several French and Canadian companies, nor of the campaigns led by private insurers of the enterprises in the United States.



- When all is said and done, it is possible to notice that there are too little experiences and nearly always in favour of major companies employees.
- Some elements of doctrine and the fact that some governments have already taken enactments assigning responsibilities in Public Health begin to bring interesting evaluations.



10. PROPOSALS OF THE DOCTRINE

- The European Network for the Promotion of Health in the workplace, established in 1996 with the support from World Health Organization and the European Occupational Safety and Health Agency have adopted the following motto “Healthy employees in healthy structures”.



- During the Congress hold in Barcelona (Spain) this network has determined that “the challenge for Europe is to find a new balance between economic efficiency and social cohesion”. Health in all its components, which includes Health at work, is becoming an asset for attaining their aim.
- This approach could be broaden outside Europe thanks to the creation of such networks in Asia and Pacific area.



11. GOUVERNMENTAL POLICIES

- At the level of principles, it's to observe the fear of pandemic related to H1N1 virus has constituted a strong evolution concerning the public intervention towards companies to induce them to collaborate for the implementation of measures of prevention in a matter outside occupational risks.
- For example, the Federal Office for Public Health of Switzerland has published a handbook allowing companies to analyse their situation and to take appropriate measures for avoiding or at least reducing the propagation of this virus.



- In France, the law forces managers to table all useful measures for forbidding smoking at the workplace.
- The employment code forbids alcoholic beverages other than wine, beer and cider and this banning can be spread by the managers for all of them inside the companies.



- There are also interesting Drug testing programs including pre-employment post accident random and reasonable suspicion except for some companies and some of their activities (as Air France), drug testing is not authorized and must be done only under the control of industrial medicine. Such practices are also developed in the United States enterprises.



21. PROOFS OF THE INTEREST OF PROMOTING OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH FOR THE COMPANIES

- As an example of “return on investment” of a strategy for implementation of programs promoting health and prevention we may mention:
 - Reduced absenteeism by 12-36% among program participants. Every dollar invested in these programs yields between 2.5 and 4.8 dollars through reduced costs associated with absenteeism;
 - in Finland every euro invested in programs to maintain the working capacity of employees reported 4 to 6 euros in return;

- At Volkswagen it has been demonstrated that the increase of 1% of the effort in favour of health has
- resulted in a gain in productivity of 1%;
- POH has also shown its impact on lifestyles and attitudes towards health in a positive way: Between 10 and 15% of participants in the sessions "Stop smoking" managed to stop their consumption. 26% of program participants to maintain body weight have managed to maintain their weight after 12 months.



- More generally, the ENWSH summarizes in 8 points the arguments for the implementation of POH in companies and organizations:
 - POH improves the working conditions of employees,
 - POH reduces the rate of absenteeism, accidents and disability
 - POH generates a capital gain on the image of the company
 - POH leads to better management of human resources,
 - POH increases productivity,
 - POH improves the alertness of employees about their health and motivation,
 - POH improves the health of employees,
 - POH generates more job satisfaction among employees

- **ENWHP work has been then usefully completed by the production of quality criteria encouraging the integration of prevention and health promotion at work in the system of quality management of organizations. Criteria specifically dedicated to small and medium enterprises have also been developed.**



22. ENHANCEMENT OF GOOD PRACTICES

- The Algerian petroleum company SONATRACH is launching a food program for its employees and focuses on a healthy and balanced diet.
- The French Company of industry of construction VINCI has launched a program in favour of its workers in Cameroon for feeding them at breakfast before they get back to work.



- In Canada, 5 SMEs in the Saarland region participate in the pilot project “Jocoeur” intended to prevent cardio-vascular and respiratory diseases. Each participant receives advices from professionals who visit the workplace to encourage adopting healthy lifestyles (nutrition, active living, tobacco-central), or to observe the treatment required in some cases.

- In Quebec BC Hydro has established a program since 1988 aiming to strengthen the capabilities of employees by encouraging them to live healthy. 80% of them enrolled in the program with a result of an annual reduction of \$ 1,2 million in sick leave.

- In Vietnam 30 companies implemented an action plan for providing information on health and lifestyle.
- In USA, in the Construction Industry there are reflection works about best management practices to isolate the construction workforce from violent event potential that can stun from the workforce itself, site entrant or the public.



2. TRACKS OF AMELIORATION

20. AN ATTEMPT OF REDUCING THE DIVIDE BETWEEN PUBLIC AND OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH

- At the very beginning of social compulsory protection Bismarck had strictly separated Occupational Insurance from Sickness benefit. And, it is most always the same in systems existing nowadays.
- So it appears necessary to implement complementarities in order to provide joint financings and actions which supposes cultural changes of mind.

- In that way the project Health Care launched by PSA Peugeot-Citroen (site of Rennes) has received grant from the state and Mutouest (First Mutual subscribed by employees) because its information campaigns were in accordance with the Nutrition & Health National Plan recommendations.



21. A REAL BALANCE BETWEEN INTERESTS LABOUR UNIONS AND MANAGEMENT CAN BE FOUND THROUGH THE QUEBEC STANDARD “ENTREPRISE AND HEALTH”

- **Entreprise is constituted both of management and employees. So the promotion of health should not be considered as a mean of making employees guilty concerning their lifestyle.**
- **On the contrary, it consists in offering their program for favourising the adoption of better behaviours of good health. This approach may conciliate the facts of making them more productive and happier.**



- Young people arriving on the labour market attach much more importance to their health and at the balance between work and personal life than the previous generations.
- Providing such program of health promotion will be helpful for attracting or maintaining them in the companies while ameliorating their productivity.



CONCLUSION

Public Health in Companies Actions should become an urgent duty for States Management and Labour Unions in order so that they may improve seriously the health of the planet populations and reduce significantly the costs for cares.



Thank you

for your attention

www.issa.int/prevention

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