

WORKPLACE HEALTH PROMOTION – QUALITY CRITERIA

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Abstract. *Workplace health promotion (WHP) has been defined as the combined efforts of employers, employees and society to improve the health and well-being of people at work. WHP is a modern corporate strategy, which aims to prevent ill-health at the workplace, to enhance health potential and to improve well-being at work. By including elements such as organizational and human resource management, WHP takes on a broader dimension than traditional occupational safety and health. Health promotion in the workplace takes several approaches: commitment to a healthier workforce by providing information on health promotion, implementation of policies and practices which assist employees make healthy choices, recognition of the impact that organizations can have on individuals.*

Key Words: *Workplace, Health Promotion, Criteria*

Workplace health promotion (WHP) has been defined as the combined efforts of employers, employees and society to improve the health and well-being of people at work. This is achieved through a combination of improving the work organization and the working environment, promoting the active participation of employees in health activities, encouraging personal development [1]. The European Network for Workplace Health Promotion (ENWHP) is an informal network of national occupational health and safety institutes, public health, health promotion and statutory social insurance institutions. It aims through the joint efforts of all its members and partners to contribute to improving workplace health and well-being and reduce the impact of work-related ill health of the European workforce.

SHORT HISTORY

1996 – The Network was founded

1997 – The Luxembourg Declaration was passed; beginning of the 1st joint initiative "Quality Criteria and Success Factors of Workplace Health Promotion"

- 1998 – Cardiff Memorandum adopted concerning the challenge for Workplace Health Promotion in Small and Medium Sized Enterprises
- 1999 – 1st European Conference in Bonn and beginning of the 2nd joint initiative "Workplace Health Promotion in Small and Medium-sized Enterprises"
- 2000 – 2nd European Conference in Lisbon and adoption of the Lisbon Declaration on Workplace Health
- 2001 – Beginning of the 3rd joint initiative "Workplace Health Promotion in Public Administrations"
- 2002 – 3rd European Conference in Barcelona, adoption of the Barcelona Declaration, beginning of the 4th joint initiative "Implementing Infrastructures to Promote Workplace Health"
- 2003 – Beginning of the 5th joint initiative "Workplace Health Promotion in the Ageing Workforce"
- 2004 – 4th European Conference in Dublin

ENWHP is a platform for all stakeholders interested in the improvement of workplace health and committed to work towards the vision of "healthy employees and healthy organizations" [2].

The Network was formally established in 1996, and up to now it has been at the leading edge of developments in European workplace health promotion. By means of various joint initiatives, it has developed good practice criteria for WHP for a variety of types of organizations as well as recommendations to enhance WHP in Europe. The objective of network is to identify and disseminate examples of good practice of WHP by exchanging experience and knowledge. By doing this the Union is encouraging the Member States to place WHP high on their agenda and to incorporate workplace health issues in all respective policies [3].

WHP involves:

Having an organizational commitment to improving the health of the workforce, providing employees with appropriate information and establishing comprehensive communication strategies, involving employees in decision making processes, developing a working culture that is based on partnership, organizing work tasks and processes so that they contribute to, rather than damage, health implementing policies and practices which enhance employee health by making the healthy choices the easy choices, recognizing that organizations have an impact on people and that this is not always conducive to their health and well-being [4].

WHY PROMOTE HEALTH AT THE WORKPLACE?

The links between work and health are clear. Those in employment enjoy better levels of health than those who are unemployed. However, the world of work can still jeopardize an employee's health and well being. Unsafe working practices, high levels of stress and inflexible working arrangements provide examples of factors that have a detrimental effect on the employee's health. High levels of sick-leaves are not only indicative of poor levels of health within a workforce, they are also signs of lower productivity and efficiency - issues that have a direct impact on an organization's well-being [5, 6]. The world

of work is undergoing a major change - a process which will continue. Some of the key issues to be confronted are:

- globalization
- unemployment
- increasing use of information technology
- changes in employment practice (e.g. short-term and part-time employment, tele-work)
- ageing
- increasing importance of service sector
- downsizing
- increasing number of people working in small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs)
- customer orientation and quality management

Not only has working life changed, but so have attitudes to work. Work today means more to most people than a mere source of income. It provides people with the opportunity for social contact and it can have a fundamental influence on a person's self esteem and identity. The workplace is, moreover, the place where most people spend a large part of their "awake" life.

The future success of organizations is dependent on having well-qualified, motivated and healthy employees. WHP has a significant role to play in preparing and equipping people and organizations to face these challenges. There are many organizational benefits to be gained from effective health promotion in the workplace [7, 8, 9]. These include:

- Increased productivity
- Reduced absenteeism
- Reduction of numbers of civil claims for accidents and ill health caused by a failure to recognize and/or control workplace risks
- Better recruitment and lower employee turnover
- Improved employee relations
- Lower levels of occupational stress
- Improved work environment
- Improved corporate image

HOW WORKPLACE HEALTH PROMOTION WORKS?

When workplace health promotion measures are implemented, employers tend to have high expectations of the success of these measures. Employers hope for economic advantages through lower absenteeism and accident rates, increased efficiency and motivation, higher quality products and services, improved company image and greater customer satisfaction. Employees tend to expect a better quality of life through increased work satisfaction, a reduction in stress, an improved working atmosphere and fewer work-related health complaints [10, 11].

Health promotion is supposed 'pay dividends' for the organizations. The ratio of cost and benefit must be in line with the organization's other investments, too. Only when the effectiveness and efficiency of the health promotion measures are ensured is there a realistic chance that workplace health promotion will develop into an integral part of the corporate policy.

With the 'Luxembourg Declaration' the members of the Network agreed on a common definition of workplace health promotion and developed guidelines for effective workplace health promotion activities. This was the basis for these quality criteria, worked out in the frame of a project running for 2 years. They are intended to provide assistance in the planning and implementation of successful, high-quality health promotion measures for all those who are responsible for health at the workplace [12, 13].

In drawing up the criteria, it was assumed that the statutory provisions on occupational health and safety are already fulfilled. However, the criteria outline how to establish a healthy organization with healthy employees. They offer a comprehensive outline for the creation of a modern corporate health policy and make it easier for organizations to determine where they stand along the route and how far they are from achieving their ultimate goals. As organizations have different resources and requirements, the criteria cannot and should not be considered as an absolute yardstick. Rather, the aim is to determine how well the organization is performing with respect to each particular criterion.

Organizations should regard their existing health promotion measures as good practice, even though they may not have satisfied all the criteria; they at least represent a step in the right direction. The following quality criteria in this report are the result of an intensive consultation and coordination process among the experts represented in the European Network.

The quality criteria formulated here are based on the model of the European Foundation for Quality Management [9, 10, 14, 15].

QUALITY CRITERIA OF WORKPLACE HEALTH PROMOTION

1. The Criteria: Workplace Health Promotion & Corporate Policy

The success of workplace health promotion depends on its being perceived as a vital managerial responsibility and its being integrated into existing management systems.

- a) The organization has a written corporate philosophy on workplace health promotion. The executive team is fully behind this philosophy and actively contributes towards implementing it.
- b) The health promotion measures are properly integrated into the existing structures and processes of the organization.
- c) The organization provides enough resources (budget, staff, rooms, further training, etc.) for workplace health promotion.
- d) The executive team / company management regularly monitors the progress of health promotion measures.
- e) Workplace health issues are an integral part of training and retraining (especially regarding the executive team).
- f) All staff has an access to important health-related facilities (e.g. break and rest rooms, canteen, sports amenities).

2. The Criteria: Human Resources & Work Organization

The most important task of health-promoting human resources and work organization is to consider the skills of the staff. The crucial factor for the success of workplace health promotion is that all employees are actively involved as much as possible in planning and decision-making.

- a) All staff has the skills (including health-related capabilities) which they need to perform their job or they are given the opportunity to acquire these skills.
- b) The work is organized so that the staff avoids being overtaxed or that too little is demanded of them.
- c) The staff is not only offered possibilities for personal career development but such development possibilities are specifically created through work organization measures.
- d) All staff is given the opportunity to actively engage in workplace health matters.
- e) The superiors support their staff and promote a good working atmosphere.
- f) The organization takes action on the reintegration of staff (especially disabled staff). The organization takes measures to make working life more compatible with family when they return to work after a longer-term period of sick leave.
- g) life

3. The Criteria: Planning Workplace Health Promotion

Workplace health promotion is successful when it is based on a clear concept which is continuously reviewed, improved and communicated to all staff.

- a) The health promotion measures embrace the entire organization and are communicated to all sections.
- b) The health promotion measures are based on a careful and regularly updated analysis is based on health-related information: work stress, health indicators, subjectively perceived complaints, risk factors, accident relates, occupational illnesses, absenteeism due to illness, expectations of all stakeholders in the organization, especially those of the staff.
- c) The entire workforce is informed about all workplace health promotion projects by means of internal public relations work.

4. The Criteria: Social Responsibility

Another crucial factor for the success of workplace health promotion is whether and how the organization fulfils its responsibility in dealing with natural resources. Social responsibility includes the role of the organization at local, regional, national and international level regarding its support of health-promoting initiatives.

- a) The organization has taken a clearly defined action (e.g. through an environmental protection management system) to avoid practices which are detrimental to people and environment.
- b) The organization actively supports health-related, social, cultural and welfare initiatives.

5. The Criteria: Implementation of Workplace Health Promotion

Workplace health promotion comprises measures for health-promoting job design and the support of healthy behavior. It is successful when these measures are permanently interlinked and systematically implemented.

- a) There is a steering committee, project group or something similar functioning within the organization which plans, monitors and evaluates the health promotion measures. All health-related key functions in the organization are represented in this body.
- b) All information (internal and external) required for the planning and implementation of health promotion measures are collected systematically and regularly.
- c) Target groups and quantifiable objectives are set for all health promotion measures.
- d) Measures for health-promoting work organization and job design as well as measures to promote healthy behavior are implemented and interlinked.
- e) All measures are systematically evaluated and continually improved.

6. The Criteria: Results of Workplace Health Promotion

The success of workplace health promotion can be measured by a number of short, medium and long-term indicators.

- a) Impacts of the implemented health promotion measures on customer satisfaction (regarding products/services) are systematically analyzed and conclusions drawn from them.
- b) Impacts of the implemented health promotion measures on the satisfaction of the staff with working conditions/work organization, leadership style and possibilities for participation, occupational health and safety schemes etc. are systematically analyzed and conclusions drawn from them.
- c) Impacts of the implemented health promotion measures on other health indicators such as absenteeism rates, accident rates, improvement in stressful working conditions, number of suggestions for improvement submitted and implemented, use of healthy lifestyle programs, level of relevant risk factors etc. are systematically analyzed and conclusions drawn from them.
- d) Impacts of the implemented health promotion measures on relevant economic factors such as staff turnover, productivity, cost/benefit analyses etc. are systematically analyzed and conclusions drawn from them.

On the basis of the criteria formulated here a questionnaire was drawn up which permits organizations to easily assess the quality of their workplace health policy [16].

CONCLUSION

Health promotion, disease prevention and the associated factors relevant to health will play a key role in the new community action programmed ENWHP which will run until 2008. The message also addresses the case for investing in workplace health promotion. It is encouraging and stimulating as well to see that companies, public administrations, hospitals, schools and universities are investing in good workplace health practices. They are keen to get involved for three major reasons: they believe in the values of working and living in a healthy way, they accept the need to respond to the manifold challenges resulting from social, economic and demographic change in all our European countries and they are convinced that these engagements are investments which contribute to their core targets, whether they refer to economic performance, efficient health care, a high level of education or a high standard of services to the public.

There is no Europe without Health, and no Health without good Workplace Health. Let's work together to build a Europe of Health! (Essen, June 2004, Dr. Gregory Breucker, National Contact Office of the ENWHP/Germany.)

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PROMOCIJA ZDRAVLJA NA RADNOM MESTU – KRITERIJUMI KVALITETA

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Promociju zdravlja na radnom mestu čine kombinovani naponi poslodavca, zaposlenih i društva da poboljšaju zdravlje i blagostanje ljudi na poslu. Promocija zdravlja na radnom mestu je moderna kolektivna strategija, koja ima cilj prevenciju profesionalnih bolesti i bolesti vezane za rad, poboljšanje zdravstvenog stanja upošljenih i njihovo zadovoljstvo poslom koji obavljaju. Svojim uticajem na rukovodstvo, organizacionim i humanim principima, promocija zdravlja na radnom mestu ima veći značaj nego tradicionalna zdravstvena zaštita i zakon o bezbednosti na radu. Promocija zdravlja na radnom mestu ima nekoliko zadataka: obavezu da unapredi zdravlje radne snage pružajući informacije uposlenima putem promocije zdravlja i da pomaže zaposlenima da naprave zdrave izbore-da izaberu zdravlje kao i da prepoznaju uticaj koji radna organizacija može imati na pojedince.

Ključne reči: radno mesto, promocija zdravlja, kriterijumi