

Keeping Health Care Workers Safe and Healthy at Work

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Pan American Health Organization

Latin American and Caribbean Countries

- | 163 million people
- | Healthcare labor force is 22 million workers

Hazardous Work Sectors

1. Agriculture
2. Construction
3. Healthcare

Occupational Hazards

- | Biological
- | Chemical
- | Enviromechanical
- | Physical
- | Psychosocial

Biological and Chemical

Biologic-Infectious hazards: Infectious-biological agents, such as bacteria, viruses, fungi, or parasites, that may be transmitted via contact with infected patients or contaminated body secretions or fluids.

Chemical hazards: Various forms of chemicals that are potentially toxic or irritating to body systems, including medications, solutions, and gases.

Enviromechanical and Physical

Enviromechanical hazards: Factors encountered in work environments that cause or potentiate accidents, injuries, strain, or discomfort (e.g., poor equipment or lifting devices, slippery floors).

Physical hazards: Agents within work environments, such as radiation, electricity, extreme temperatures, and noise that cause tissue trauma.

Psychosocial

Psychosocial hazards: Factors and situations encountered or associated with the job or work environment that create or potentiate stress, emotional strain, interpersonal problems.

Biological Agent Exposure in Health Care Settings

- | **Bloodborne Pathogens**
- | **Cytomegalovirus**
- | **Diphtheria**
- | **Hepatitis Viruses**
- | **Herpes Simplex**
- | **M. tuberculosis (DRBT)**
- | **Measles**
- | **Mumps**
- | **Meningococcal Disease**

Biological Agent Exposure in Health Care Settings (continued)

- | **Pertussis**
- | **Poliomyelitis**
- | **Rabies**
- | **Rubella**
- | **Scabies**
- | **Staphylococcus (MRSA)**
- | **Streptococcus**
- | **Varicella**
- | **Viral Respiratory Infections**

In Latin America and the Caribbean

- | Proportion of infections for Hepatitis B virus (HBV), Hepatitis C virus (HCV), and Human Immunodeficiency virus (HIV), among healthcare workers due to occupational sharps injuries is the highest in the world:
 - » HBV = 55%
 - » HCV = 83%
 - » HIV = 11%

Each year:

- | 3 million healthcare workers worldwide are exposed to bloodborne pathogens due to needlestick injury of which:
 - » 2 million are exposed to HBV
 - » 900,000 are exposed to HCV
 - » 170,000 are exposed to HIV
- | This results in > 40% of all HBV and HCV infections and 2.5% of HIV infections among healthcare workers

Resurgence of TB

Chemical Agent Exposure

- | Disinfecting/Sterilizing Agents
- | Antineoplastic Agents
- | Waste Anesthetic Gases
- | Latex Allergy
- | Others

Enviromechanical Agent Exposure

- | Lifting-based injuries
- | Violence/assaults
- | Work station design

Physical Agent Exposure

- | Radiation
- | Lasers
- | Noise

Psychosocial Agent Exposure

- | Work Organization
- | Situational
- | Technological
- | Professional

American Nurses Association

- | Survey found that 88% of participating nurses reported that occupational health and safety issues influenced their decision to continue in nursing

Conditions Affecting Healthcare Workers

- | Inadequate/fragmented health resources at the worksite
- | Poor wages
- | Reduced or inadequate educational systems
- | Geographical and distributional imbalance of healthcare workers – urban vs. rural creating serious shortages in the most needy areas
- | Migration of healthcare workers
- | Occupational hazards and risks

Trends Show:

- | Patients are getting older, sicker, and heavier
- | Healthcare workers are getting older and more fatigued

Is Acceptable Risk Really Acceptable?

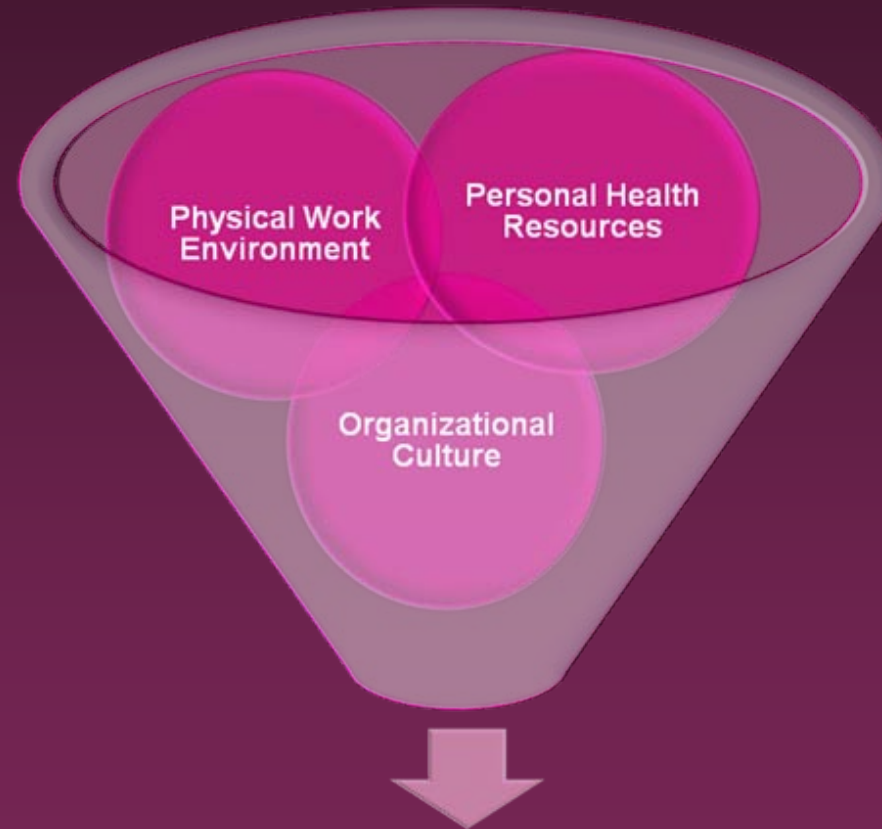
Too often the answer is YES

Culture of Safety and Health

Best Practices for Occupational Safety and Health

- | Healthy Hospital Project in Ecuador designed to strengthen Ecuador's capacity to promote healthier and safer hospitals by reducing the transmission of infectious diseases (PAHO; Ecuadorian Ministry of Public Health; University of British Columbia; Provincial Infection Control Network of British Columbia).
- | Occupational Health Mobile Units in Romania to reach remote and rural populations
- | Healthcare of Countryside Workers in Nicaragua (Association of Countryside Workers)
- | Protecting Healthcare Workers: Preventing Needlestick Injuries (WHO, PAHO, NIOSH, and Latin-American Partners)
- | Reduction of errors related to shiftwork and fatigue
- | Infrastructure design and redesign
- | Safe patient handling including mechanical patient lifts, patient-care assessment protocols, no-lift policies, training (Veterans Administration Hospitals)

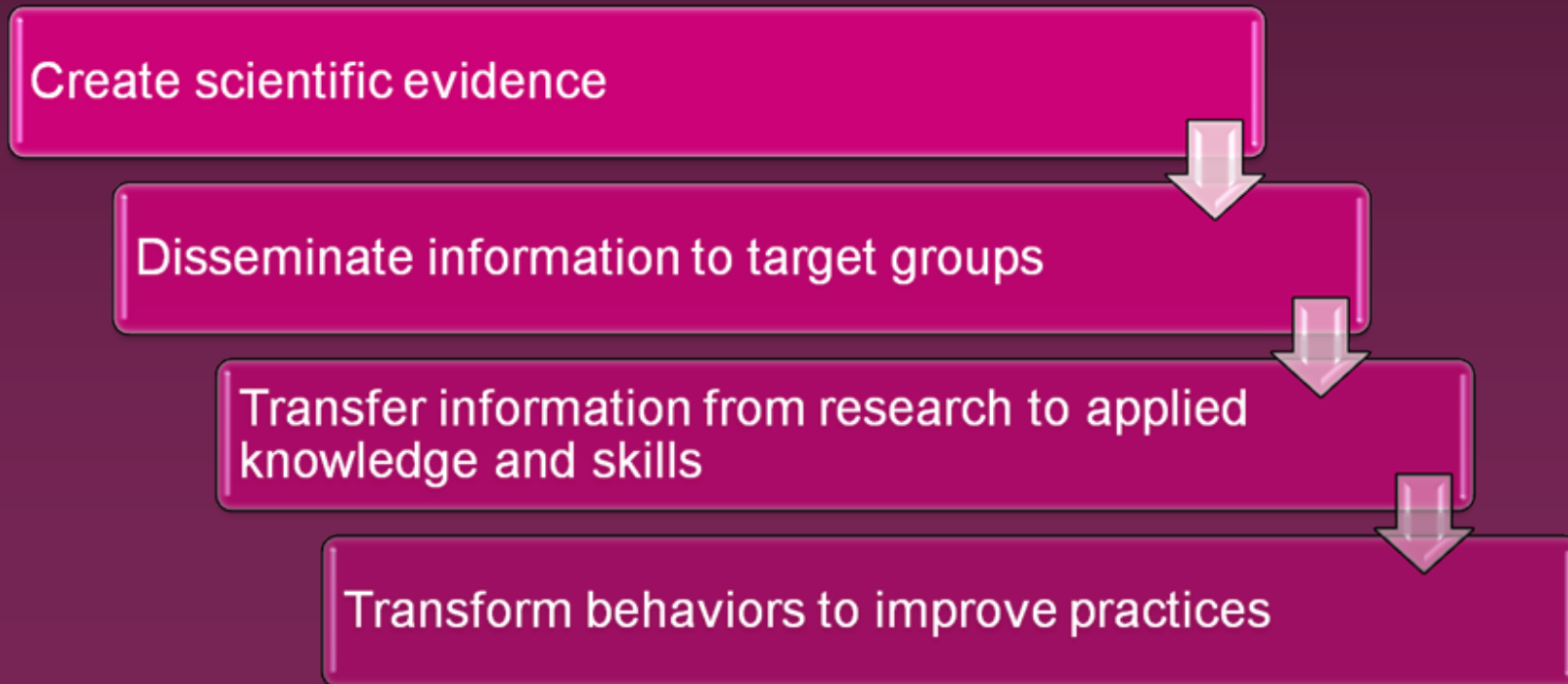
Health, Safety, and Well-being at Work



Healthy Workplace Integration

From Research to Practice

- | Imperative to transfer research findings into transformed practice



Better Work Environments

- | Improved hazard surveillance
- | Improved culture of health and safety at work
- | Best practices identification
- | Public health marketing
- | Research and practice partnerships