

Steps Session: C-1: Enhancing prevention in Occupational Health: Implications for Academic Programs on 10/28 10:00-11:30

Prevention in OEM : Possible Structures

Philip Harber

Vice Chair- Academic Affairs

Dept of Family Medicine

Professor, Chief, Division of Occupational and Environmental Medicine

David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA

Dr. Harber focused his talk on the best ways to implement integrated health promotion and health protection approaches into medical academic programs. The goal is to have academic program lead the way for this field in the existing institutions of education, research and service. One way would be to implement integrated programs into existing Occupational Environmental Medicine (OEM) programs which are the typically the largest programs in the preventative medical fields.

There are a number of structural changes that can occur to achieve the goal of integrated academic programs. One way would be to add health promotion as a required competency for OEM physicians. Another idea would be to have health promotion as an elective focus area for some OEM physicians. A third method would be to separate disciplines with bidirectional OEM orientation so that there is an exchange of information between health promoters/educators and OEM physicians. And lastly, medical programs can eliminated OEM as an isolated specialty and merge the field with preventative medicine. These structural changes need to be supported by attitude changes so that OEM physicians will support the need for health promotion. There are also a number of mechanisms that can be used to ensure that the successful implementation of these programs. This can be done through ACGME requirements, ABPM tests, NIOSH requirements for ERC' and training/research funds, and market forces.

A Multidisciplinary Approach to Occupational Health & Safety Education

Jacqueline Agnew, PhD, RN, FAAN

Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health

Dr. Agnew discussed a multidisciplinary approach to occupational health and safety education from two perspectives: occupational health nursing and the NIOSH Education and Research Centers (ERCs).

Occupational health nurses are not strangers to health promotion and health education. Looking at the occupational health nursing field, health promotion and health education is among some of the training elements, part of AAOHN competencies, and included in the ABOHN certification process. By addressing the person as “a whole” they are trained to identify individual factors that may interact with workplace experiences. Yet, with the changing nature of the workplace and the workforce, including new processes, exposures

and risks, there is a need for a changing knowledge base for occupational health nurses. The need for a changing knowledge base poses a number of new responsibilities for occupational health nurses, including participation on contemporary occupational health safety teams with professionals from other traditions. Education programs are also faced with expanding the responsibilities of nurses.

Education and Research Centers (ERCs) in occupational health and safety is also a source of interdisciplinary education. With their recent expansions in special programs and a trend toward the inclusion of faculty from social & behavioral sciences, these centers are a good training ground for integrated health promotion & health protection education. Although ERCs may be faced with a number of structural challenges and faculty challenges, there seems to be an increased interest to tailor programs to include health promotion topics. Tailoring OSH education through ERC programs is a chance to educate professional with grounding in principles of health promotion.

Developing New Training Programs in Occupational Health Psychology: Challenges and Opportunities

Heather R. Fox, PhD

Towson University &
American Psychological Association

The psychology field needs to take a more active role in research and practice to prevent occupational stress, illness, and injury. This viewpoint gave rise to the field of Occupational Health Psychology (OHP). NIOSH-proposed definition of OHP: *OHP concerns the application of psychology to improving the quality of work life, and to protecting and promoting the safety, health and well-being of workers.* In the period 1990-1999, NIOSH and the APA launched a series of initiatives to promote the new field of OHP. Four international conferences on work, stress and health were convened and the Journal of Occupational Health Psychology was founded in 1996. Of special importance, a program has been implemented to support both post-doctoral and graduate level training in OHP at major universities. Funds provided by a five-year cooperative agreement between NIOSH and the APA have enabled several universities to initiate the development of curriculum in OHP. University programs are at various stages in the development and implementation of their course offering. With the 11 current participating schools, ten of them are now housed in the psychology department and one program is housed in the school of public health. These are ambitious programs that focus both on topics of health promotion and health protection. Although there may have been obstacles to the implementation of OHP programs there have been numerous reported and observed successes. There has been a heightened visibility of OHP in psychology and related fields, increased international collaborations, and a path towards the formalization of the OSP field.

Occupational Settings for Public Health and Prevention

Rosemary K. Sokas, MD, MOH

University of Illinois at Chicago School of Public Health

- Dr. Sokas gave an overview of the occupational settings for public health and prevention.
- Health promotion can be included in public health education. Public health education includes both professional and research training.
- Another possible health promotion program can be integrated into environmental health.
- When you look at the reported causes of death in the United States , 2001, heart disease and cancer are the highest.
- If you look at heart disease closer it can be a result of both life style choices and job experiences. Increase risk of heart disease include smoking, diet, exercise, particulate pollution, stress (maybe due to job loss), and one's community.
- With working comes many positive things but also can result in safety and health hazards, stress, lost time with family, and other problems.
- "Without work all life goes rotten"
- Workplace may be depicted as the cause of many problems but also can be the location where these problems, including safety and health issues, can be addressed.

Discussion

- One audience member asked the panel if they had thought about reaching out to business schools so that the business perspective could be represented in these programs (with a focus on ROI). Dr. Harber responded that we really have to look at what our goal is, that is, is health alone the goal or ROI (basically let's not just focus on dollars when we are discussing health).
- NIOSH in the past has tried to work with business schools, with dual PhD and certificated in health economics. This has been difficult to fit into the curriculum and there was a lack of interest among students.
- One of the participants specifically spoke about teaching business in a public health setting, and that it did not appeal to his students.
- Another participant mentioned we should model our educational and work system as it is done in France, where they have 6 weeks vacation and a booming economy, this is the best way to reduce stress and psych. factors in the workplace.