

Declaration of Mexico on mental health and work: a call for action

Declaração do México sobre saúde mental e trabalho: chamada para ação

During the 6th International ICOH Conference on Work Organization and Psychosocial Factors WOPS, a Panel Discussion on *Workers' Mental and Physical Health Priorities* was held, with the participation of experts from Brazil, Colombia, Spain, United States and the Pan-American Health Organization, and the exchange and contributions of all attendees to the conference.

Based on several context considerations about the world of work, the dialogue held between the experts and the audience, and the conclusions from the panel, the organizers of the conference declare that:

1. As a result of globalization, the effects of informatics technology, massive communications and many of this manmade tools, life in the XXI century has created a paramount variety of stressors within the world of work and far beyond, making geographic and time boundaries inexistent, as well as individual's private life and working life boundaries seem to be erased.
2. There is an intertwining close relationship of mental health and work taking into account the definition made by WHO in 2012, and the WHO comprehensive *Mental Health Action Plan 2013-2020*, launched and adopted by the 66th World Health Assembly (WHO, 2017), that strongly reaches out to strengthen effective leadership and governance for mental health; and to implement strategies for promotion and prevention in mental health.
3. The evidence showing that life stressors, including those coming from the inequities of work (work content) and employment conditions (labor context) (WHO, 2016), can have disastrous consequences on workers' health and wellbeing. One of them is the permanent work communications taking over personal, family, and leisure time, creating a misbalance that affects workers' health in all dimensions: physical, mental, psychological, family, spiritual, and social health.
4. Detection, diagnosis, and visibility of mental health disorders, including major depressive disorders, anxiety and bipolar disorders, acute stress and post-traumatic stress disorders, are linked to working and employment conditions. These links are reflected in the declaration of the global epidemics of "*Workplace Stress, a collective challenge*" done by ILO in 2016 (ILO, 2016), and WHO's global campaign "*Depression: let's talk*" launched during the World Health Day in 2017 (WHO, 2017).
5. The fact that the burden of these problems detected at the workplace is often placed on the worker, biasing solutions to frame actions under the "healthy self-management" approach. Not addressing the basic causes of the problems present in work environment, the managerial styles, or the ways organizations work neglect the measures to prevent and control the causes of mental, emotional or mood disorders.
6. The need to prioritize preventive actions to improve workers' health and wellbeing with a holistic and gender approach can be done by:
 - a. Encouraging employers to understand that workers are their most valuable asset, and to have workers' health as a priority in their policy, mission, vision, values, and goals.
 - b. Creating awareness about mental health by listening and holding dialogues with managers and workers, as well as translating knowledge and disseminating information to create awareness in society as a whole.
 - c. Using screening and sentinel events to foresee early signs of poor mental health at the workplace before they become a real problem.

- d. Focusing on prevention to address problems that affect mostly young working populations and avoid extreme decisions such as suicide.
 - e. Using holistic and long-term approaches for health care and occupational health services that are capable of providing multidisciplinary, comprehensive, and sustainable solutions for workers' mental and physical health problems.
 - f. Implementing workplace interventions using different sectorial points of view (health, labor, education, industry, etc.), with a multilevel perspective that involves management, workers, families, society, and health and labor institutions.
 - g. Advancing research to understand how modern societies induce to stressful living and working conditions affecting all dimensions of workers' health, and seeking ways to build resilience.
 - h. Creating and enforcing a culture for youth health at basic education levels, preferably before young adults enter into the labor market.
 - i. Promoting public policies based on evidence to enhance mental health promotion for the entire workforce.
7. Encourage the design and implementation of workers' *mental health promotion* activities or programs¹ as effective solutions to improve working and employment conditions, including:
- a. Using highly effective interactive and participatory approaches involving workers and managers.
 - b. Changing managerial styles towards creating healthy workplaces and eliminating exploitation, discrimination, inequalities, and other forms of unfair work.
 - c. Using tools and practices of occupational health psychology and positive psychology taking account of gender, age, multiculturalism, ethnicity, generational differences, within others, which coexist in working populations.
 - d. Enhancing the implementation of a culture of healthy workplaces that can improve worker's performance, productivity, and wellbeing.
- e. Using multilevel approaches to promote healthy lifestyles at individual level; promote protective factors at the enterprise level; encourage flexibility and adaptation to the changing world of work; and, learn from experiences and good practices to replicate them.
 - f. Encouraging permanent dialogue between government and society involving all stakeholders (unions, employers, academia, researchers, OHS professional associations, health systems, OHS services, etc.) to understand the needs for changing public labor and health policies that affect workers' health.
 - g. Keeping in mind that macroeconomic models impose certain rules and restrictions to job performance and productivity, particularly for small and medium size enterprises, as well as informal and self-employed workers.
 - h. Understanding and addressing the complexity of workers' health problems caused in and out of the workplace, with a holistic approach that can provide multidisciplinary services and support within national health systems.
 - i. Ensuring to collect, register and analyze data, and document the experiences that provide the evidence of successful and non-successful solutions.
8. Promoting and putting in place alternative solutions that can contribute to build healthy, productive, happy, and resilient workplaces and societies, such as:
- a. Using the evidence of experiences and practical solutions.
 - b. Promoting quantitative and qualitative research oriented to interventions/actions.
 - c. Increasing democratic practices for knowledge translation and information dissemination.
 - d. Encouraging the participation of all stakeholders and the use of modern communications through networks and communities of practice focusing on mental health and work.
 - e. Disseminating information through information technology and social media.
 - f. Integrating public health policies and health authorities in the practice of workers' health programs at the workplace by addressing individual health as a whole.
 - g. Strengthening the practice of organizational and positive psychology for addressing mental health and work, as well as work and life styles.
 - h. Maintaining a spirit of constructive observation and objective criticism to analyze workers' health issues

1. Mental health promotion involves actions to create living conditions and environments that support mental health and allow people to adopt and maintain healthy lifestyles. These include a range of actions to increase the chances of more people experiencing better mental health (WHO, 2016).

at the workplace and generating innovative solutions for changing the ways and the future of work.

Based on these premises, the organizers and the attendees of this conference, call the academia, researchers, employers, workers, NGOs, civil society as a whole, and governments as a whole, to act for protecting and improving mental health at work, and reaffirm their commitment to contribute to building healthy, productive, happy, and resilient societies for the generations that will follow us in the coming decades.

Interactive panel discussion-Workers' mental and physical health priorities:

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The organizers endorse and sign this document on 1 September 2017, in Mexico City.

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