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Faculty of Medicine



Medical Committee
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Community Medicine



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Today we will start a new topic which is a specialty by itself

Occupational Health

What is the sense for occupational health?

Nowadays **half** of the world's population are workers, so we are talking about 3 to 3.5 billion people are workers, and need somebody to look after them in their work places and are (the job of the workers) the major contributors to economic and social development. Their health is determined not only by the work place hazards but also by social and individual factors and access to the health services.

For example: worker might fill in side of "sanding machine" (a machine use to make sand very fine, that it using for cleaning up buildings) and lose his life, so this is the sense for occupational health.

History of occupational health:

****Is occupational hazards recognition a new or old thing?**

It is old and is even at the time of the Greek (old Greek), and Egyptians, that the authorities recognize what we call now "work death hazards".

We can tell that "mining" used to be and still at this moment one of the most hazardous job, still you can hear in the radio that a mine in china collapse and there is several thousand people under the ground!

What about workers themselves, when did they recognize these hazards?

We can see a drawing at the entry of these mines by those workers, one of them showing the worker having something in his hand; it could be a piece of cloth putting it at his nose or mouth while he is doing his work, what did you recognize if you see this?

- 1- First this mean that this worker recognized that there is a hazard in his work.
- 2- That he is breathing these materials that can get through his nose, so he recognized the route of entry of these materials.
- 3- He recognized that he can protect himself by using something to cover his nose and mouth.

After all these developments over the years, the **mask** is the idea that those workers were doing (something to cover the nose and the mouth during the job to prevent inhalation of dangerous materials)

So these mean that workers themselves started to recognize this problem.

**Then came the middle ages in Europe and people like to look at that era of time as “the dark ages of Europe”; one of the reasons that in those times there was no value for human beings and the owner of a factory or an agricultural land when he wants to sell it he will sell it with its workers, so they were sell and buy peoples and workers. When they buy somebody they like to look at his muscles, teeth, and his built; he should be strong person to be able to handle the hard job that’s he is going to be offer, but nobody give them much attention about what might happen to their health when they are doing their job.

The **first written discussion** specifically directed toward matters of occupational safety and health were those of “**Paracelsus**” in the 15th century; he was the first to begin.

However if we talked in medicine, “Bernardino Ramazzini” wrote the first text on occupational medicine, *De morbis artificum diatriba*, and he is generally regarded as the father of occupational medicine (Hippocrates is the father of medicine). Ramazzini is an Italian man and he is the first person to get-together a monograph (small book) about the impact of the work place on workers (1770) and he called it “**trade diseases**” because industry wasn’t so common in that time, trading was much more common. Ramazzini wrote about the health hazards for dozens of occupations ranging from ditch diggers to tailors, from religious activities to those quite secular. So he recognized again that different jobs have different hazards.

**After this period came the “industrial revolution”:

The industrial revolution is dated with the creation of **textile** machines, this is the beginning of industrial revolution.

What would happen for workers at this time, would it be better, would it be worse or nothing change?

Actually what happened at that time situations for workers deteriorated (becoming very bad) and one major reason is that workers who used to work at home or nearby their homes, now they have to move to wherever the factory is, that mean to another village or another city, and this is the first time for these people to be away from their families.

- Now the wages at that time were very low.
- Number of hours was unlimited (14-16 hours per day).
- No age limit, child of 5 years old or very old person can work in these factories.
- The situation inside these factories was unhealthy, there is no services offer for those workers.

And again because the wages and the short of money they have to live together (5-6 of them) in one room, so that reduce the rent and this make it very crowded areas around the factories, that make these places and these factories a source of pollution, sicknesses and illnesses.

So this bad situation and looted rights:

- 1- Bring the attention of the people live around these places, who start to ask the government and the authorities to do something about it.
- 2- Some doctors and scientists –for the first time- start to evaluate the impact of pollution coming to these factories in such cities.
- 3- Workers unions was created at that time, and start to pushes mainly on increase the wages and reduce the number of work hours, but without concern workers health!
- 4- Some of lightened people in their English Parliament “in England” start to bring this to the attention.

>> And this pressure end up with “**factory inspector**”, they created this new job which will give the authority of getting inside these factories. Recently (for the last several years) in U.S for example there were discussions in that those factory inspectors nowadays -even in U.S- sometimes they might be unable to doing their jobs!!.. but the outcome of the industry pollution time is factory inspector.

This factory inspector indirectly start to improve on the health of workers, although they don’t know much about health of workers but still they start to look after hygiene, enough bathrooms, cleaning facilities, placing to change, shower...etc

One more reason that again things became very bad for workers, that they start to deal with new instruments, new machines and handle new chemical materials (like colors)->hazardous

In the United States, in the early twentieth century, **Dr. Alice Hamilton became the first woman physician appointed to a faculty position at Harvard University, which was the first school to offer a course in occupational health in 1916. Where she worked at the School of Public Health promoting safe and healthful work practices in the United States.

Later on, in that era, there was the First World War, this was a test for workers and there were a lot of studies carried on those people to see how you can improve their productivity, and it was an opportunity for scientists for the first time to study different techniques and theories. A lot of what we have nowadays in regard to how you can run work places, how you can improve the project of people came from that time, so they were doing certain tests and examinations or studies that not allow nowadays by human rights script.

And from that time, there are two theories in management:

1- X-theory:

The management believe that workers are lazy people and don't like to do their jobs, and that he have to push, observe, follow them to do their works.

2- Y-theory:

The management says that people are honest, they like to do their jobs, and just they need some follow up.

And some people shift from one theory to another (because he's trying which one will work). Much later came the Japanese School which has different ways than these 2 theories.

In World War 2, there was a lot of loses among mans, and we start to have a new concept which is called "**skilled labor**" and because there were not much workers available, this skilled labor was given a high value, good salaries, so now they start to talk about U.S as a land of opportunity, and the highest salary used to be in U.S.

It was **1970** when the first law or act which called OSH* (occupational safety and health), so this OSH law in U.S was the first and the best (until this moment) worldwide to take care of workers, and based on this act we start to have another OShEr which called OSHA (occupational safety and health agency) and they might call it occupational safety and health administration, this is responsible for the health of workers in U.S and the osher person like we mentioned before factory inspector has all the authority to get anywhere in any of these industries wherever it is and also he can close down the factory.

And this OSH became a good reference that you can use and get information in regard to certain occupational problems and hazards, and many countries of the world start to have their own oshers but the major reference is this OSH (1970) , and they have good researches regarding their field.

In U.S if somebody lose his work because of labor injury he will have millions of dollars that equal his productivity that he could do along his life if he hasn't got that injury (huge amount of money not like other countries).

SORRY FOR ANY MISTAKE

GOOD LUCK 😊

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