

Occupational Health

Is occupational health an issue in the Pacific? With worries about infectious diseases, and the major problems of diabetes and cardiovascular diseases and other health concerns, does occupational health really matter? What do we know about it? Is there a problem and, if so, how big is it?

Pacific island nations are working to improve their economies, and so are developing industries. There are a wide range found in the Pacific and they include tourism, fishing, shipping, garment manufacture, agriculture, construction, mining, transport, retailing, plus the health and education sectors and many more. Workers include mechanics, electricians, farmers, divers, shop keepers, construction workers, doctors, nurses, pilots and numerous others.

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How much is known about occupationally related illness and accidents? How many injuries occur? Some reporting occurs, particularly serious injury and death; how much goes unrecorded? How much loss of productivity occurs due to illness and injury and what is the economic cost of this? Almost every day the newspaper seems to have something about injuries and illness or death related to work.

Do health workers recognise illness and injuries that have arisen as a result of people's work, and if so do they know how to prevent it happening again? For example is there lead poisoning, if so, how much, and who is affected? What infectious diseases are being acquired at work? How many musculoskeletal problems arise through work? How many people have pre-existing conditions aggravated by work? What are the training needs in occupational health?

There seem to be more questions than answers. This brief article aims to raise some awareness about occupational health. If you know about occupationally related conditions in your part of the Pacific why not let others know through the pages of Inform Action. Those interested in occupational health may like to write to us or email us so that we can start to build up a network of interested people, and start looking into this issue.

Dr John Heydon (john@fsm.ac.fj)

Dr Narendra Singh

Fiji School of Medicine

Fax: +679 311 700