Vulnerable Populations: Health & Safety Strategies for a Global Workforce

Violence and Unsafe Working Conditions in Immigrant Workers

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Objectives: Violence and Unsafe Working Conditions in Immigrant Workers

- Identify occupational health nursing challenges in meeting the needs of diverse workers/work groups engaged in precarious employment arrangements.
- Discuss strategies and interventions to improve situations that create vulnerability in global populations at risk.

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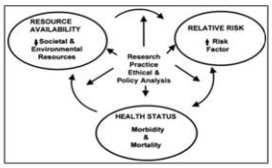
FIGURE 1



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Sweatshops….

- "….a factory that violates 2 or more labor laws" "…poor working conditions, unfair wages, unreasonable hours, child labor, and a lack of benefits for workers"
- Precarious… "dependent on chance… uncertain"

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Violence and Unsafe Working Conditions in Immigrant Workers

- Resources
  - Environmental (e.g., access to care)
  - Societal/Socioeconomic
    - Violence/Feeling Safe
    - Unsafe working conditions
    - Breaks
    - Hygiene
    - Health Insurance
    - Housing, hunger, 2nd jobs, education, un/underemployment
- Relative Risk
  - Individual Behaviors
    - Smoking
    - Physical activity
    - Obesity
- Health Status
  - Morbidity
  - Mortality
    - Pain
    - Injury Status
    - Ability to Work

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Day Laborers

217 day laborers interviewed in Spanish about occupational health and safety, in addition to their success at finding work.

- Violence assessment:
  - Do you feel safe while waiting for work?
  - Do you feel safe when working?
- Unsafe Working Conditions
  - At your last job, did you have access to breaks?
  - Did you ever not get paid for day labor?
- Hygiene
  - Do you have access to:
    - Toilet, Place to Wash Hands, Kitchen
- Do your receive health and safety training?
- Do you have health insurance?

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Perceived Safety at Work:
Day Laborers, n=217

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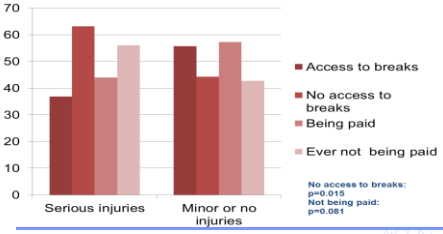
Select Working Conditions by Injury Status,
Day Laborers, n=217



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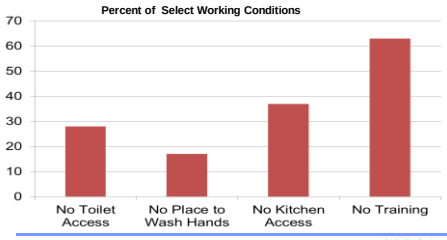
Day Laborer Working Conditions, n=217



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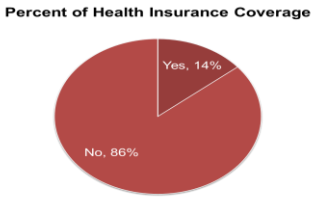
Day Laborers and Health Insurance Status, n=217



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OHN Challenges

- How can we, as OHNs, influence poverty in this country?
  - Recognize disparities in low wage work—not "just" undocumented workers
  - Advocate for basic human rights and social justice
    - Safe work for all
    - Health Insurance for all
    - Safe housing, good jobs, a meaningful wage
  - Engage, as individual OHNs and as an organization AAOHN, in policy work to influence social determinants that influence health outcomes

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Potential Interventions

- Environmental
  - Educate re: ACA (if legal status) or other health insurance options (e.g. Healthy San Francisco for those undocumented)
  - Culturally sensitive care interventions
  - Focus on health literacy
- Socio-economic
  - Support establishment of Worker Centers to advocate for human rights and a living wage
  - Work with community and faith-based groups to provide housing/food/education--- "a hand up, not a hand out."
- Relative Risk
  - Participatory action research/community engagement for empowerment, education, and advocacy
  - Individual/personal responsibility: understand use; ask for and wear personal protective equipment
- Morbidity and Mortality
  - Primary prevention is our goal!

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How best to promote health equity?

- Structural change
  - How best to mitigate gross income differences
  - High quality education, beginning with early childhood
- Living and working conditions
  - Promote healthy work environments
  - Make healthy choices the easier choices to make
- Community Interventions
  - Strengthen social and community support
- Individual Interventions
  - Smoking cessation, walking clubs
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Selected References

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