THE QUALITY OF BIOLOGICAL RISK COMMUNICATION FOR THE VALIDATION OF OCCUPATIONAL FORMATIVE PROJECT

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INTRODUCTION

The prevention of biological hazard in working setting necessarily implies a training for the operators, who should become able to adopt right behaviours and procedures within their competence and activity. The Italian Decree Law n. 626/94 expects training as an integral part of the hazards risks and control process from the employer.

A proper communication about this topic has a great importance because of the present lack of specific knowledge in the most part of working settings not related with healthcare that could lead both to underestimate dangers and to an excessive alarmism, due to media as well.

It is evidently necessary an integrated training programme, with a specific methodology taking in account quality standards for the construction of messages (correction-completeness, reliability, usefulness, incitement to attention, comprehensibility, balance, independence, accessibility, coherence, cultural suitability, scientific facts, continuity-repetitiveness, timeliness and for the formulation of communicative strategy).

METODOLOGY

Before embarking on any programme of prevention-aimed information, it is necessary to know the knowledge level, the behaviours and the hazard perception of people involved. The actual intervention has therefore been preceded by a questionnaire aimed at estimating some basic knowledge about biological hazard among the workers and its perception. The questionnaire has been divided into four sections.

Giving the questionnaire created the occasion to stimulate the workers attention and make them thinking over these issues, thus creating the premises of an involvement in the training process further step. The information obtained have been used for the production of explanatory material, with a particular care for the textual and graphical formulation. Such material (leaflets, plasticized pocket cards, posters) has been given to the workers during some meetings that aimed at illustrating these issues through the workers active involvement in the discussion, in order to facilitate the attention and a quick understanding.

RESULTS

The questionnaire has been given to 20 workers assigned to particularly hazardous jobs. The 71% had already received information about biological hazard, mainly from the media (31%), then from the qualified doctor (28%) and from the workers representatives for safety (17%). The definitions of infection and of biological hazard are known respectively to the 67% and the 46% of workers, whereas, in a scale from 1 to 10, the majority of the interviewed (25%) gave to such hazard an 8 importance level; for the 20%, the level to be assigned to it should be 10.

The questionnaire on biological hazard transmission routes has been divided into four sections.

- Indirect transmission may be:
  - By food: microorganisms come in with foods or beverages and are accepted with bacons
  - By respiratory: microorganisms come in with air and are spreaded with aerosols produced talking, coughing and sneezing
  - By contaminates materials: sewage or sludge or wherever is possible touch dirty surfaces
  - By direct (object contact) or instruments.
- Using gloves certificate EN 374 for risk biological protection, to manipulate potentially infected materials that can produce aerosols
- Using masks for risk biological protection, to manipulate primary infected materials that can produce aerosols
- Using properly overalls during the attendance in areas at risk

As a consequence of these results, informative material has been produced in order to create a greater awareness about biological hazard and precautionary measures to be adopted. The meetings during which such material was given led to a greater awareness of these issues, checked through the discussion.

CONCLUSIONS

For the accomplishment of this intervention, a methodology has been used which is based upon quality standards. The use of a simple language and the active involvement of workers: it produced an evident awareness of the dangers connected to the working activity. The workers themselves began to suggest working procedures, protection and prevention interventions overcoming organizational difficulties. Even though a complete evaluation of the intervention would be possible only after a lapse of time, it is however sensible to affirm that the methodology used produced good results.