

WONCA AND ICOH STATEMENT ON WORKERS AND THEIR FAMILIES

Introduction

Health and work are intimately linked. Work under good conditions can have positive effects on health and wellbeing. On the other hand, health and safety are threatened in poor working conditions, which are a daily reality for many workers around the world. Workers exposed to hazards at work suffer various work-related diseases. Failure to adapt working conditions to the capabilities of workers with chronic health problems may limit their ability to work. Poor health, injuries and disabilities prevent many from working at all or at full capacity. Those who do not work frequently suffer worse health because of limited resources or social isolation. Yet, the health and safety of people at work are too often addressed separately from their health outside of work. Similarly, the health and safety of those at work are often viewed in isolation from the health and safety of their families and communities. Each of these affects the others.

The World Organization of Family Doctors (WONCA) and the International Commission on Occupational Health (ICOH) recognize that most health care and preventive services for workers and their families in the formal and informal health system is provided in primary care settings along with variously organized occupational health services. A global challenge is to make more systematic use of the primary care setting and available occupational health services. It is essential to improve the health and productivity of workers by increasing the number, expertise and capacity of health professionals able to prevent and manage work-related health problems. In addition there is an urgent need to increase the number and capacity of occupational health experts and services. This is especially true for those working in low and medium resource countries, the informal economy, small businesses, and agriculture.

PLEDGE

The World Organization of Family Doctors (WONCA) and the International Commission on Occupational Health (ICOH) pledge to work with our partner organizations (including WHO and ILO) to address the gaps in services, research, and policies for the health and safety of workers and to better integrate occupational health in the primary care setting, to the benefit of all workers and their families.