

Poster: 0011

Community Partners for Healthy Farming Intervention Research***JK Ehlers (1) presenting***

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Agriculture is among the most hazardous industries with an unintentional death rate in 2001 of 21.0 per 100,000 workers for agriculture vs. 3.6 for workers in all industries (National Safety Council, 2002). Agriculture varies in terms of farm size, hazards, labor regulations, and owner autonomy. Although many intervention strategies have been tried, knowledge about what works best is limited. The purpose of the Community Partners for Healthy Farming Intervention Research (CPHF-IR) program is to implement and evaluate existing or new interventions for reduction of agriculturally-related injuries, hazards, and illnesses. Consistent with the objectives, synergistic partnerships between experienced researchers and stakeholders, e.g. communities, workers, managers, agricultural organizations, agribusinesses and media, provided their unique resources for accessing the target populations, guidance throughout the research process, dissemination, and building infrastructure for further promotions of agricultural safety and health.

Specific intervention projects and target populations were selected from responses to three requests for proposals. Accomplishments have included: improved ergonomics for small vegetable growers and harvesters of grapes and berries; engineering controls, training, and promotional materials related to tractors; 1,292 safety improvements made voluntarily by farmers in the Certified Safe Farm project; and, in collaboration with lay health advisors (Promotores), reduced eye injuries among Latino workers. Musculoskeletal pain was reduced five-fold with no significant change in productivity by decreasing the weight of grape-filled tubs from 57 to 46 lb. Management and workers enthusiastically adopted the smaller, lighter tubs with the only incentive being the improved working conditions. This was the first field study validating the NIOSH-lifting-equation.

Such partnerships between researchers and stakeholders produce not only sustainable interventions, but products and models with the potential to expand geographically and into other sectors. Without additional funding from the Community Partners program, the eye-injury prevention project was replicated by a community coalition with the largest citrus grower in FL decreasing injuries 75%. The development and dissemination of interactive, narrative materials for promoting the use of roll-over protective structures (ROPS) on tractors has resulted in multiple outcomes: increased sales and use of ROPS and recognition by non-researchers about the value of evaluation to enhance support for useful intervention programs.

The model and materials have been utilized for primary prevention among healthcare workers and adolescents, and for introducing public health or economics in high school social studies and language classes and in college agricultural business and economics classes. NIOSH is utilizing the model created for Simple Solutions: Ergonomics for Farm Workers, a document incorporating the format and portions of three CPHF-IR projects, for a comparable document for the construction industry in English and Spanish. Products of every project are being widely disseminated electronically, in trade publications and professional journals, and otherwise among agricultural workers and those who influence them. The third series of projects (funded 2003-2007) targets ergonomic interventions among tree-fruit harvester and nursery workers, computer-based training for non-English speaking vineyard workers, and expansion of the Certified Safe Farm project to include medical claims data in their evaluation.

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