

2110 - "It's your work, so you have to obey the rules the company sets:" Health, Financial, Housing and Immigration concerns of Texas Seafood Processors during COVID-19

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Session: Oral: Ensuring equity & justice among workers

Program: Occupational Health and Safety

Abstract

Seafood processors are an essential and often invisible population who are at a higher risk of COVID-19 than the general population due to immigration status, precarious employment, and occupational hazards. Therefore, we conducted interviews with workers to understand how SARS-CoV-2 exposure was handled in seafood processing plants. Through qualitative research, we explored the occupational, social, cultural, political-economic, and mental health experiences of seafood workers in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic throughout the Texas Gulf Coast. To accomplish this, we conducted semi-structured interviews with seafood processors (n=16) and stakeholders (n=4) and discussed how they experienced COVID-19 prevention in their workplace. The data was coded in Atlas.ti and analyzed using an inductive approach. We were interested in understanding how one's social position in the workforce impacts COVID-19 rates and experiences. To our knowledge, we are the first team to conduct a qualitative study with Gulf Coast seafood processors during COVID-19. Our results show that the majority of seafood processors had elevated risks of financial and housing insecurity, health inequity, and immigration concerns during the second and third waves of the COVID-19 pandemic. By the end of the presentation, attendees will 1) understand the unique occupational health inequities for immigrant populations, 2) examine the heightened occupational health risk factors for immigrant workers due to limited bargaining power, and 3) examine how occupational standards and lack of oversight create siloed workplaces that can increase exploitation and decrease workers' health and safety.

Presenter



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