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Prevention and Wellness Across the Life Span

APHA 140TH ANNUAL MEETING & EXPO
OCT 27-31, 2012 SAN FRANCISCO, CA



Infancy



Teen Years



Retirement

268591 Occupational safety and health hazards among homecare aides

Monday, October 29, 2012 : 8:50 AM - 9:10 AM

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Background and Objectives. Homecare (HC) aides form a critical workforce providing care and independence for the nation's elders and people with disabilities. HC is one of the fastest growing industries in the U.S. and HC aide is one of the fastest growing jobs. The objective of this study was to characterize qualitatively occupational safety and health (OSH) hazards, preventive interventions, and HC worker-client safety and health linkages across a spectrum of HC aide occupations.

Methods. We conducted 12 focus groups among HC aides comprising in total 99 participants; 13 in-depth interviews with HC agency supervisors; and 5 in-depth interviews with HC clients. Focus group and interview transcripts were coded using NVivo software to analyze specific themes.

Results. The most frequent OSH concerns were: back injuries from various client care tasks; verbal abuse; clients on oxygen addicted to smoking; exposure to bloodborne pathogens and other infectious diseases; long-distance driving; and psychosocial stress from low pay, lacking benefits, and feeling that society takes their work for granted. Ergonomic patient handling devices and mandatory in-service trainings were the most promising safety interventions, while incorporating HC workers' and clients' safety in home building design was identified as the most promising long-term intervention.

Conclusions. The U.S. population is aging and the portion of the population that has traditionally performed HC is decreasing. A new, young workforce of HC aides is needed. Public policy interventions need to support HC work as a viable career choice. Improving OSH in HC is an important part of this effort.

Learning Areas:

Occupational health and safety

Learning Objectives:

1)Discuss the importance of qualitative research phase in occupational safety and health (OSH) research as a foundation for a quantitative research phase and development of preventive interventions. 2)Identify specific OSH hazards among homecare (HC) aides and direct linkages to safety, health, and well-being of HC clients. 3)Describe existing national policy tools and initiatives that have potential for improving safety and health for both the HC aides and clients. 4)Identify existing promising work practice interventions implemented by HC agencies or HC aides themselves. 5)Emphasize the importance of the HC sector as a supporting pillar for the entire US healthcare system and the essential role of HC aides in it.

Keywords: Home Care, Caregivers

Presenting author's disclosure statement:

Qualified on the content I am responsible for because: I have been a co-investigator in several federally funded grants related to occupational safety and health (OSH). The research projects have been implemented at the Department of Work Environment, University of Massachusetts Lowell. I've been leading the qualitative research phase of this NIOSH funded Safe Home Care Project (this submitted abstract). I also led the qualitative research phase of our earlier NIOSH funded Project SHARRP (Safe Home Care and Risk Reduction for Providers).

Any relevant financial relationships? No

I agree to comply with the American Public Health Association Conflict of Interest and Commercial Support Guidelines, and to disclose to the participants any off-label or experimental uses of a commercial product or service discussed in my presentation.

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