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Occupational safety and health in Ecuador

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Background: The occupational safety and health diagnostic (OSH) constitutes a first step for the design of national programs and ongoing reviews of existing regulations. The OSH diagnostic performed in Ecuador in 2011 is devastating due to the high labor accidents' toll, the scarce official information, lack of high-level academic education, and insufficient research.

Objective: The objective of this study is to diagnose the current state of occupational safety and health in Ecuador from official sources of information.

Methods: We examined the geographical situation, sociodemographic and public health data, legal regulations, statistics on occupational accidents and diseases, training and research on OSH in Ecuador between 2010 to 2015. The main sources of data and information were: national laws and regulations on OSH, conventions of the International Labor Organization, resolutions of the Andean Community of Nations, and official web pages of national public bodies. In addition, we analyzed the scientific production on OSH of authors with Ecuadorian affiliation, carried out in Ecuador, and published in journals indexed in the main scientific databases.

Results: In Ecuador, the rate of employment is 94.3%, and 40% is recognized as adequate employment. The percentage of the working population covered by the social security has raised during the period of study, but it remains around 42% of this population. The country has ratified the 32 ILO OSH conventions and has adopted regional regulatory instruments. The national OSH legal body starts with the Constitution. A total of 99.156 occupational injuries and 2.733 occupational were notified, showing a significant increase from 2010 to 2015. Regarding fatal occupational accidents, 1.524 cases were notified. Training in OSH is focused on occupational risk prevention. Twelve scientific articles on OSH from authors of Ecuadorian affiliation and developed in a national context were identified.

Conclusions: OSH status in Ecuador faces a persistent high toll of informal workers, an aging working population, an increase of work accidents, a scarce scientific evidence and an outdated legislation. The design of a OSH National Plan should become a priority to improve working conditions and health in Ecuador.

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