Global Estimates of Occupational Accidents and Work-related Illnesses 2017

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Objectives

Recording occupational accidents and occupational diseases is one of the cornerstones for good occupational health and safety. Globally, the recording of occupational accidents and work-related diseases is very weak. Better and reliable statistics are needed as the base of the decision-making. Better safety and health increases competitiveness.

Reliable statistics - better safety and health

The ILO has released the global estimates of occupational accidents and fatal work-related diseases in the last four World congresses. The objective was to provide a new update of the global estimates.

Methods

The methods used in this update were the same as in the previous studies. In the previous study, estimates were classified according to the regions defined by the WHO. In this study, estimates have been also be classified by the United Nations (UN) geographical regions. Based on latest scientific reports the previous level of respiratory disease cases was considered under-represented, and new attributable fractions (AF) were used to estimate the magnitude of occupational respiratory deaths caused by COPD and Asthma.

Results

We estimated 2.78 million deaths globally occurring annually, up from 2.33 million deaths in 2014 based on years 2010 and 2011. The main reason for increase was due to previous underestimates of COPD and asthma. Further increases were related to growing number of many non-communicable disease deaths and better coverage of the global employment leading to higher injury deaths. The fatal occupational accidents accounted for 13.7% of all cases. With the inclusion of COPD in our estimation, respiratory diseases (17%) had increased and was among the top three illnesses after circulatory diseases (31%) and malignant neoplasms (26%). Together, they contributed more than three-quarters of the total work-related mortality, followed by occupational injuries at 14% and communicable diseases (9%).

Conclusion

Similar to previous estimates, the number of estimated work-related illnesses far exceeds that of work accident and fatalities. Asia emerges on top and constitutes about two-thirds of the estimated work-related mortality, nearly 6 times that of Africa and Europe. It was estimated that China, followed by India, occupied the top two posts in global work-related mortality as expected based on the size of population. Good practices and initiatives will have to be advocated to address risks associated with safety and health and related reporting of negative outcomes.