



Article Title

COVID-19 in occupational settings: lessons from 100 years ago and addressing the disease today.

Citation

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Abstract

COVID-19 is a disease caused by the novel coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2). On January 30th, 2020 the outbreak of Novel Coronavirus 2019 was declared a Public Health Emergency of International Concern by the World Health Organization. COVID-19 was declared a pandemic on the 11th of March 2020. The virus spreads from person to person through close contact, touching contaminated surfaces and then touching the eyes, nose or mouth. Preventive measures are taken at all workplaces to stop the spread of COVID-19. Social distancing, regular hand washing with soap and water for 20 seconds, use of alcohol-based hand sanitizer and cough etiquette must be practiced at all times. Hospitals, schools, colleges, hospitality, apparel and manufacturing industries now practice hand hygiene, social distancing, regular disinfection of contaminated surfaces, staggered work shifts, correct use of face mask if mild symptoms develop and shutting down of establishments as per instructions of the local health authorities. COVID-19 is already affecting tens of millions of informal workers all around the world. India has a share of almost 90 percent of working people which amount to 400 million workers in the informal economy, who are at the risk of falling into poverty during this crisis. The current lock down measures in India have affected these workers, compelling them to return to rural areas. Poverty along with the spread of the COVID-19 would further worsen the situation. Without dwelling on the healthcare setting, this paper discusses various preventive measures to be implemented in three different sectors. These interventions can be adapted to others as well, to stop the transmission of COVID-19.

Summary

The flu pandemics of 1918 and 2009 have equipped the world to deal with similar situation fairly successfully. But the world has changed with increase in the number of factories, colleges, schools, hospitals, nursing homes and offices emerging all around the world. Travel across

continents for work and leisure has increased. However, as can be seen, even after 100 years the preventive steps taken to prevent the transmission of flu pandemics are not vastly different. India is home to 400 million workers in the informal economy, which amounts to a share of almost 90 percent of working people, who are at the risk of falling into poverty during this crisis. The current lockdown measures in India have affected these workers, compelling them to return to their hometowns in the rural areas. Our poverty-stricken population would further be impacted were COVID19 to spread in the community. The preventive measures, listed above and enforced in different work settings, must be adapted to individual workplaces to stop the transmission of COVID-19 among the working population and thereby preventing any impending catastrophe.