

Progress of Occupational Health Policies and Action of China

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Abstract

Introduction: China is becoming the global manufacturing center, employing over 775 million people, accounting for around 55% of China's total population. A healthy workforce is fundamental for China to pursue its Healthy China 2030 strategy and the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

Approaches: Based on our studies and practice on occupational health in China, I analyzed the progress of policies and actions in recent years, especially the collaboration with international organizations and experts.

Results: Since 2018, China rolled out a massive reshuffle plan to deepen institutional reform of the governmental organizations, a new National Health Commission has been set up, especially, the responsibility of occupational health of the formal National Health and Family Planning Commission (NHFPC) and the formal State Administration of Work Safety (SAWS) will be merged and authorized to the National Health Commission.

In recent years, along with the pursuing of social economic development, China fights against COVID-19 pandemic in all-of-society approach, great efforts has been made on occupational health, in general, comprehensive measures are based on the hierarchy of risks controls, practice the vision of basic occupational health service, policies and actions are summarized as follows:

- Occupational diseases prevention and control. (1) The Law of the People's Republic of China on the Prevention and Control of Occupational Diseases, which has been amended four times between 2003 and 2018, is the core and cornerstone of the entire regulatory system for occupational health, currently, the law is on the official process of further amendment. (2) The Catalogue and list of occupational diseases in China is being updated based on the ILO List of occupational diseases (revised 2010).
- Healthy China 2030 strategy. Under the Chinese situation and the political commitment to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs), a national strategy of Healthy China 2030 was launched by the Chinese

government in 2016. Accordingly, occupational health had been prioritized by the following Healthy China Action Plan (2019-2030) as one of its 15 major health projects (special campaigns). Objectives and indicators in this major health project of occupational health covered occupational hazards and wellbeing of workforce. In such a context, employers in the health sector and governmental organizations were encouraged to be the role models of occupational health protection.

- Occupational health protection in health sector. Two laws relevant to it have been adopted since 2019: (1) the Law of the People's Republic of China on Basic Medicare and Health Promotion was adopted in December 2019, the law bans any organization or individual from threatening or harming the personal safety or dignity of health workers. (2) Moreover, the Law of the People's Republic of China on Medical Doctors has been passed in August 2021, it protects the lawful rights and interests of physicians providing a legal guarantee for the implementation of the Healthy China strategy. (3) After the outbreak of COVID-19, dozens of proactive policies were issued and implemented for the protection, care and support of health workers and other key workers, the policies and actions covered aspects of their safety, health and wellbeing, including: Salary and benefits, Work-related injury insurance, Daily life support, Providing qualified PPE based on risk-assessment, Good work organization, Mental health services, Health surveillance, Family support, Keep workplace free of violence and discrimination, Save life of infected health workers, Honor the heroes and role models, Promotion of professional title with preference and Disposal of medical wastes.
- Occupational safety and health in agriculture. In 2017, China proposed the Rural Vitalization Strategy as a key move to accelerate the modernization of agriculture and rural areas, and has since adopted a host of policies to chart the roadmap for rural vitalization. Recently, the ILO, the Chinese Peasants and Workers Democratic Party and Peking Union Medical College (PUMC) jointly organized a 3-day training in Dafang County, Guizhou Province to improve the occupational safety and health of rural workers and farmers.

Across the development and implementing of the above policies and actions, the occupational health team of the PUMC has been providing fully technical support, for instance, providing suggestions and consultation to the central government and the All-China Federation of Trade Unions, promoting of HealthWISE training-of-trainer (TOT) workshops with ILO, translating the ILO and WHO instruments/guidelines, international collaboration and communication, conducting courses on occupational health of health workers among medical students.

Conclusions: In terms of occupational health, China faces pressing challenges and opportunities among huge working population, strategies with whole-of-society and whole-of-government approach are crucial, international collaboration is needed.