

Environmental and Occupational Health

ABSTRACT

Environmental and occupational health is affected by chemical, physical, radiological, and biological agents in the air, water, and soil. Health risks include injury, and exposure to toxic radiation, carcinogenic and teratogenic agents, leading to cancer, lung and heart diseases. Environmental factors may result in instant death or long-term illness from unsafe environmental or working conditions. The environment affects populations from small workplace settings to large-scale communities, as well as having global effects. International and governmental responsibility, through policies, laws, regulations, standards, policies, and planning, is vital for tackling global aspects of pollution, including climate change, cataclysmic natural events, drought, air and water pollution, and the potentially catastrophic effects of weather changes. Preparation for disasters is a core public health function in managing the after-effects of tsunamis, hurricanes, floods, and drought. These are potent political and public health issues with huge economic and societal effects.

SUPPORT MATERIAL

Student Competencies: Transferable Knowledge and Skills

The following are points of emphasis highlighting key principles that public health graduates are expected to understand and apply into practice. The key points arise from this chapter and other studies in specialized courses, seminars, readings during public health education, and continuing education. The selected skills and knowledge are divided into two parts. The first consists of core questions pertaining to immediate student requirements, while the second refers to competencies essential for successful public health practitioners. These include competencies recommended by the American Public Health Association in 2007, as well as those of the European Association of Schools of Public Health and the Public Health Agency of Canada's 2008 Report on Core Competencies. For more detailed competencies please consult the Association of Schools of Public Health website at: <http://www.asph.org/document.cfm?page=851>

Part I: Core Questions

1. What is the public health significance of waterborne disease?
2. What is the importance of government regulation of the environment in terms of public health?

3. What is the role of the local authority in sanitation of water, sewage, garbage, food control, and business licensing?
4. What agencies should be involved in prevention and planning for natural and human-caused disaster management?
5. What is the importance of the environment in the New Public Health?
6. What are the responsibilities of the employer, the government, and the worker in occupational safety and health?
7. Why is it important for a country to have an occupational safety and health authority with regulatory powers?
8. What is the "worker's right to know"? What is the "healthy-worker effect"?
9. What steps should an employer take to reduce safety and health hazards? What incentives should be established to ensure maximum employer effort?
10. Who is responsible for disease caused by exposure to a toxin, which affects a worker after a long incubation period following exposure or cessation of employment? Give examples of environmental health planning.
11. List the diseases with the largest total annual health burden from environmental factors.
12. Discuss the challenges and controversy associated with water chlorination as a public health measure.
13. List illnesses resulting from indoor pollution that may be prevented through specific actions.
14. Discuss personal actions that can be taken in the home to reduce the risk of illnesses associated with indoor pollution.
15. Discuss policy issues for local and national public health and environmental systems to reduce environmentally related diseases.

Part II: Knowledge and Skills

1. Identify priority issues in your country and globally in environmental and occupational health among the myriad of new hazards, and identify areas needing further research.
2. Identify genetic, biological, and psychosocial factors that affect susceptibility to adverse health outcomes following exposure to environmental hazards.
3. Understand standard approaches for the environmental and occupational hazard prevention and control.
4. Describe the direct and indirect human, ecological, and safety effects of major environmental and occupational agents.

5. Describe genetic, physiological, and psychosocial factors that affect susceptibility to adverse health outcomes following exposure to environmental hazards.
6. Describe federal and state regulatory programs, guidelines, and authorities that control environmental health issues.
7. Specify current environmental risk assessment methods.
8. Specify approaches for assessing, preventing, and controlling environmental hazards that pose risks to human health and safety.
9. Explain the general mechanisms of toxicity in eliciting a toxic response to various environmental exposures.
10. Discuss various risk management and risk communication approaches in relation to issues of environmental justice and equity.

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