Occupational Health in Brazil: challenges and opportunities

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21st February 2022
Agenda

- Brazil: a continental country with heterogeneous challenges
- OH in Brazil / statistics
- Challenges in specific sectors and activities
- Current and future opportunities
“A continental country with heterogeneous challenges”

- **214 million** inhabitants (IBGE, 2022)
- **Fifth largest** country in the world and accounts for one-third of LATAM’s population
- **Diversified economy** that includes industry, agriculture and a wide range of services
- Brazilian **labor force** is estimated at **107.3 million**, of which:

  - **Workers in informal jobs**: 40.6% (the majority in the North and Northeast regions).

### Estimate of workers by sector, Jan 2022

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sector</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Services</td>
<td>69.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industry</td>
<td>13.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td>7.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction</td>
<td>9.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

IBGE (Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics), Jan 2022.
Occupational Health in Brazil

Context

- ANAMT (1968) / 27 local component societies
- 60s/70s - high prevalence of work-related accidents
- 1972 - Legislation made it mandatory for companies to implement Occupational Health and Safety services
- 1978: Brazilian Regulatory Standards (NRs) in OH&S
- 2002 – Occupational Medicine was formally recognized as a medical specialty

**OH Physicians: 19,797 specialists**
(Southeast region: 56.1% / North region: 3.8%)

Contrasting working conditions and unequal access to OH/IH resources

- Overall, a **highly regulated** country, however, some sectors/activities lack specific regulations.

- Compliance-driven practices X health and well-being of workers seen as a real value

- Unequal availability of OH professionals in some regions

- Capability of third-party OH providers and lack of high standard medical care/resources in some regions

- Labour inspections

**Informal work**
- Lack of protection by labor legislation and Social Security benefits.
- Low risk perception / education
- Extremely vulnerable to occupational health risks
- Lack of access to OH/IH resources
Work-related Disability Benefits – Brazilian Social Security


37% - Low back pain + shoulder injuries
35%
65%

- Work-related accidents
- Work-related illnesses

Top 5: Public administration; transportation; construction; retail; healthcare.

Challenges for tracking work-related disability/illness statistics:

- One key data source
- Workers in informal jobs or those not registered with the Brazilian Social Security
- Underreporting
- Lack of proper investigation and recording of work-related illness with long-term health effects
- S/NAV (Notifiable Diseases Information System) - not well implemented and widely used in all regions.

Work-related Disability Benefits due to mental health disorders: sectors with the highest frequencies, 2012-2016.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sector</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Public administration</td>
<td>18.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bank</td>
<td>12.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public transportation</td>
<td>9.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Healthcare</td>
<td>7.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mail service</td>
<td>6.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>46.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: INSS (Brazilian Social Security)
Challenges in specific sectors and activities

**Small-scale mining**
- Remote, rural areas; poorly educated/skilled workers; no OHS regulations; lack of proper inspections; exposure to several hazards
- Chemical (mercury, silica dust); physical (noise, UV); biological (mosquito-borne diseases; unclean water); psychosocial; injuries

**Agricultural sector (family agriculture)**
- Injuries; heat stress; musculoskeletal disorders; pesticide illness/poisonings; respiratory disease
- Older workforce; 1 in 7 is covered by the Social Security
- Underreporting of cases due to pesticide poisoning: **50 cases for each registered case**
- 2010-2019: **233% increase** in intoxications related to occupational exposure to pesticides (MoH).

**Solid waste workers**

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MSD have been a leading cause of long-term sick leave in Brazil.

2015-2020: Low Back Pain and Shoulder injuries accounted for 37% of total work-related Disability Benefits (INSS)

2008-2018:
- Steady trend of new disability benefits due to non-work-related MSDs.
- Significant decrease in new disability benefits due to work-related MSDs.

de Miranda CB, Simões AG, Silva-Junior JS, Fischer FM. Temporal trend of social security disability benefits due to musculoskeletal disorders from 2008 to 2018 in Brazil. Safety and Health at Work. 2022
Opportunities

- **Social dialogue and more interconnection** between workers, unions, employers, research centers and professional associations on occupational health matters.

- **Local and international cooperation** and exchange of best practices across different sectors and industries.

- **Stakeholder integration**: mutual interdependency and the complementary nature of the formal and the informal sectors.

- Increased **awareness** of occupational hazards and **empowerment of workers** to help manage health risks.

- Continued **capability development** in basic OH matters, especially in Primary Health Care services - relevant entry point.

- High quality **Fitness for Task** assessments, **Health Surveillance** and other OH programmes.

- Interplay between OH services of companies and medical professionals from the Brazilian Social Security.

- **Modernization, standardization and simplification** of systems for recording and surveillance of work-related illnesses (compulsory notification).

- Merge prevention of work-related illnesses with employee **evidence-based well-being offerings** and workplace health promotion.

- Workplace **culture** which recognizes that all occupation-related illnesses are preventable.

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Thank you!
¡Gracias!
Obrigado!