4.Q. Health at work and employment

Innovation in home care sector and its impact on workers’ well-being: a participatory diagnosis

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Introduction:
Elderly home care is a sector where working conditions are unfavorable for the workers because of physical and emotional burden and psycho-social risks. Largely feminized and employing low-skilled workers, it develops innovative services to meet the new needs of the aging population with a loss of autonomy. The impact of this type of innovation on the well-being of workers is poorly analyzed in the literature. Adopting a workplace health promotion and empowerment approach, our objective is to understand how working within an innovative project in this sector impacts the well-being of workers.

Methods:
A participatory action research was carried out in two socially innovative project aiming at improving the well-being of the beneficiaries (seniors and family caregivers). The first is a service innovation based on the hourly flexibility of the worker. The second consists of a new technology based innovation. 3 sessions of group analysis methods (i.e. a discussion group methodology) were carried out in each project (comprising 9 and 12 home care workers respectively).

A fourth session was organized to communicate the results to the management. A questionnaire assessing empowerment was administered at the end of the 4 sessions.

Results:
The results showed that workers are considerably impacted by the psychosocial risk factors related to the work organization linked to the introduction of an innovation. Action research has helped strengthen worker empowerment.

Discussion and conclusion:
The research-action highlighted the presence of a tension between the search for well-being of the elderly and the well-being of the workers. This tension can be regulated if the innovation integrates the participation of the workers in the organization of the work.

Key messages:
- Working as part of a social innovation involves more psychosocial risks related to the organization of work than hardship related to the content of the work.
- Participation of the workers in the organization of the work.