

An organisational approach to preventive psychosocial risk management

COMMENDED

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The issue

The Portuguese Institute of Oncology, O Porto, a specialist hospital, is a complex organisation that integrates various professional groups and services. The Institute's challenge is to ensure the effective prevention of all kinds of psychosocial risks — such as stress, burnout, emotional pressure, workplace violence and harassment — across the whole organisation.

Action taken

Risk management at the Institute is based on an organisational approach to prevention and health promotion. It is treated as a strategic function of the organisation.

Systematic risk assessment is at the heart of the Institute's general framework for managing psychosocial risks at work. Every job is subject to the risk assessment process. A general evaluation questionnaire is used to identify the main psychosocial risks and develop an evaluation report with a proposed psychosocial intervention plan, and these are discussed by a focus group.

Written policies for the prevention of psychosocial risks ensure leadership commitment and manager and worker participation in the preventive management process. The organisation is divided into 80 areas of risk management, with each area coordinated by a local risk manager. Middle managers are responsible for managing psychosocial risk activities in their departments. Both managers and workers participate in risk management activities, such as brainstorming sessions, focus groups, questionnaires, health needs surveys and developing health and training plans. An annual training plan containing actions related

to the prevention of psychosocial risks has been drawn up. In addition, newsletters and reports are distributed on a regular basis.

The prevention of psychosocial risks and promotion of health is carried out based on the expertise of an occupational health psychologist, cooperating, when necessary, with an occupational physician and a technician responsible for safety at work. The most complex cases are handled by a psychologist or other external expert.

Finally, initiatives have been established to encourage workers to manage their own health, such as anti-smoking campaigns, encouraging physical activity breaks during work time and partnerships with local fitness facilities.



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⁽¹⁾ The implemented activities were based on a contribution from Professor J. Aguiar Coelho, Hospital Administrator and a pioneer in Portugal in the study, dissemination and implementation of stress and psychosocial risk prevention practices in hospitals.

Results achieved

- Since 2006, 25 psychosocial risk assessments have been developed. Several health-at-work projects have also been developed.
- Since 2010, 57 training activities have been held on the topic of psychosocial risk management.
- The hospital has observed reductions in absenteeism and levels of stress.
- Because problems are resolved rather than ignored, there is improved job satisfaction among workers and an improved psychosocial work environment.

