



Strengthening the Occupational Health Expertise and Scientific Performance of Public Health Institution of Turkey



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Risk communication

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Learning Objectives

1. have basic knowledge of risk perception
2. have basic knowledge of risk communication
3. be able to communicate on a health risk in a company, a community, the general public

Risk communication

- Work related health problems are mostly multicausal.
- Often the link between work and health effects is not very obvious.
- Experts will try to make an objective quantitative assessment using a relative risk and an attributive fraction in the exposed workers
- Workers (layman) perceive the link between work and health problems more subjective, in an intuitive way.
- The subjective perception can differ a lot from the objective assessment. This causes incomprehension and disrupted communication.
- To bridge this gap it is important to know the mechanisms of risk perception and to know why there are differences in opinion on the risk.

Risk perception

Layman will perceive the risk higher than the expert when:

- The risk is unknown or misunderstood
- The consequences are more serious
- There have been known victims in the past
- The risk can not be perceived by our senses
- The risk is man-made (versus natural)
- The risk is not a free choice
- There is no benefit for the person who undergoes the risk
- The risk can not be controlled by the person himself
- There is no trust in the persons who carried out the risk assessment
- There is no consensus between experts
- There is a lot of media attention.

Risk communication

Risk communication is an important tool to prevent

- that serious risks are not taken into account
- an out of proportion worry for minor risks.

It supports the right prioritization in a policy of effective risk management.

Keywords are:

- Clear goals and expectancies
- Timeliness
- Openness
- Consistency
- Trust
- Knowledge of and insight in the target audience

Rules for risk communication

- Have a good insight in the composition of the target audience, their functions, knowledge and (communication) culture.
- Try to know what the goals, the expectations of the target audience are. What are they interested in.
- Try to know how the communicator is perceived.
- Keep the initiative. Be master of the agenda. Be alert and foreseeing.
- Communicate in time, If too late, it can be difficult to counter incorrect information from third parties.
- Create trust. Show empathy and goodwill.
- Be clear, consistent, to the point. Don't give too much perspectives.
- Be open. Hiding information can be disastrous when it becomes known. But sometimes it is better not to tell things which will provoke unnecessary worries.