



# 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.