History of Occupational Health in the Philippines

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Abstract

In the Philippines, efforts to promote occupational safety and health were already evident during the American Period in the Philippines with the institution of the Employer's Liability Act of 1874 directing the employers to compensate the family of a deceased worker whose death was caused by workplace conditions, or by the neglect of employers in the execution of their duty to protect the safety and health of their employees. There are other subsequent legislations aimed at providing occupational health and safety. The Workmen's Compensation Act through Act NO. 3428 of December 10, 1927 required compensation not only for death but also for illnesses and injuries caused by workplace exposures. Commonwealth Act No. 104 on October 29, 1936 called the Industrial Safety Law enforced certain rules and standards for the mining industry. Republic Act No. 1054 or the Free Emergency Medical and Dental Treatment Act of June 12, 1954 stipulated the need for emergency dental services to employees. In 1903, physicians began to be employed in industries to provide medical treatment for sick and injured workers. In 1923-1932, the Section of Industrial Hygiene was established under the then Bureau of Health. This was followed by the implementation of the Workers' Compensation Act No. 3428 and the Emergency Dental and Medical Service Act NO. 1054. After World War II, the Philippine Association of Occupational Medicine (now PCOM) was formed (www.doh.gov.ph).In 1950, the Joint ILO-WHO Committee on Industrial Hygiene issued its first international definition of occupational health. Then finally, the history of occupational health and safety has indeed started with the functions and structure of the Department of Health. By the virtue of E.O. 119, the DOH Office of Public Health Service was created which had the Non-Communicable Disease Control Service tasked with the responsibility of formulating policies, programs and standards primarily for the prevention and control of Occupational Health, Cardiovascular Diseases and Cancer.