

Final revisions of the International Code of Ethics for Occupational Health Professionals, adopted by the ICOH Board on 10 February 2014

Introduction
<p>2. The field of occupational health is broad and covers the prevention of all impairments arising out of employment, work injuries and work-related disorders, including occupational diseases, the protection and promotion of workers' health and all aspects relating to the interactions between work and health. Occupational health professionals should be involved, whenever possible, in the design and choice of health and safety equipment, appropriate work methods and procedures and work practices relevant to health, safety and work ability of workers. They should encourage workers' participation in this field as well as feedback from experience.</p>
<p>3. <i>(The second sentence)</i></p> <p>It should be duly recognized that there are particular occupational health needs of workers as determined by factors such as gender, age, ethnicity, physiological condition, social aspects, communication barriers or other factors.</p>
<p>4. <i>(The fourth sentence)</i></p> <p>The competence of these occupational health professionals should be mobilized within the framework of a multidisciplinary team approach</p>
<p>5. Many other professionals from a variety of disciplines such as chemistry, toxicology, engineering, radiation health, epidemiology, environmental health, environmental protection, applied sociology, health and social insurance and health education may also be involved, to some extent, in occupational health practice.</p>
<p>6. The term «employers» means persons with recognized responsibility, commitment and duties towards workers in their employment by virtue of a mutually agreed relationship. The term «workers» applies to any persons who work, whether full time, part time or temporarily for an employer; this term is used here in a broad sense covering all employees, including management staff, the self-employed and informal sector workers (a self-employed person is regarded as having the duties of both an employer and a worker).</p>
<p>7. <i>(The second sentence)</i></p> <p>In general, these duties, obligations and responsibilities are defined by statutory regulations.</p>
<p>8. <i>(The fourth sentence)</i></p> <p>This should include adequate staffing, training and competence development, which includes the continuous updating of knowledge and skills, and support from and access to an appropriate level of senior management.</p>

9. Further basic requirements for acceptable occupational health practice, often specified by national regulations, include free access to the workplace, **and to relevant information needed for occupational health objectives. Other basic requirements are** the possibility of taking samples and assessing the working environment, making job analyses and participating in enquiries and consulting the competent authority on the implementation of occupational safety and health standards in the undertaking.

11. *(The second sentence)*

Such practice should take place under controlled conditions and within an organized framework **involving competent occupational health services universally accessible for all workers. This practice must be** relevant, knowledge-based, sound from scientific, ethical and technical points of view, and appropriate to the occupational risks in the enterprise and to the occupational health needs of the working population concerned.

12. It is increasingly understood that the purpose of a sound occupational health practice is not merely to perform assessments and to provide services but implies caring for workers' health and their working capacity with a view to protect, maintain and promote them **and taking into account the family situation and the life circumstances outside work.**

Basic principles

(The second sentence)

The purpose of occupational health is to serve the **protection and promotion of the physical and mental** health and social well-being of the workers individually and collectively.

Duties and obligations of occupational health professionals

Aims and advisory role

1. *(The second sentence)*

In pursuing this aim, occupational health professionals must use validated methods of risk **assessment and health promotion**, propose effective preventive measures and follow up their implementation. **While responding to the health and safety needs expressed by employers, workers or authorities, the occupational health professionals should be proactive in terms of improving health and safety at work on the basis of their professional competence and ethical judgment.**

Development of a policy and a programme

3. *(The fourth sentence)*

Occupational health professionals must ensure that they possess the required skill or secure the necessary expertise in order to provide advice on programmes of prevention which should include, as appropriate, measures for monitoring and management of

occupational safety and health hazards, **an understanding of national regulatory requirements**, and, in case of failure, for minimizing consequences. **The quality and effectiveness of occupational health programmes should be regularly audited in the objective of continual improvement.**

Information, communication and training

6. *(The second sentence)*

The occupational health professionals must co-operate with the employer, the workers and their representatives to ensure adequate information and training on health and safety to the management personnel and workers. **In communicating about risks at work and their management, occupational health professionals are required to address language barriers, cross-cultural differences and other diversities among the management personnel and workers that may affect the effectiveness of communication.**

Health surveillance

8. *(The second and third sentences)*

The relevance and validity of these methods and procedures **should be consistent with available scientific evidence and relevant good practice.** The surveillance must be carried out with the **non-coerced** informed consent of the workers.

Information to the employer

10. The results of the examinations prescribed by national laws or regulations must only be conveyed to management in terms of fitness for the envisaged work or of limitations necessary from a medical point of view in the assignment of tasks or in the exposure to occupational hazards, **In providing such information**, the emphasis should be placed on proposals to adapt the tasks and working conditions to the abilities of the worker.

Contribution to scientific knowledge

15. *(The third sentence)*

Occupational health professionals involved in research must design and carry out their activities on a sound scientific basis with full professional independence and follow the ethical principles **relevant to health and medical research work. These include social and scientific value, scientific validity, fair subject selection, favourable risk benefit ratio, informed consent, respect for potential and enrolled subjects, review of protocols and potential conflicts of interest by an independent and competent ethics committee and protection of confidential data. The occupational health professionals have a duty to make their research results publicly available. They are accountable for the accuracy of their reports.**

<p>Conditions of execution of the functions of occupational health professionals</p>
<p>Professional independence</p> <p>17. <i>(After the last sentence)</i></p> <p>Such conflicts may distort the integrity of the occupational health professionals who must ensure that the harm does not accrue with respect to workers' health and public health as a result of conflicts.</p>
<p>Equity, non-discrimination and communication</p> <p>18. <i>(The second sentence)</i></p> <p>All workers should be treated in an equitable manner, without any form of discrimination as regards their condition, gender, social aspects, convictions or the reason which led to the consultation of the occupational health professionals.</p>
<p>Organizational ethics and contracts of employment</p> <p>19. <i>(Before the first sentence)</i></p> <p>The public or private institutions and organizations employing occupational health professionals should adopt a programme of organizational ethics that is aligned with the ethical principles of this Code. These institutions and organizations should enable and support the conduct of occupational health professionals according to the principles of the Code.</p> <p><i>(The fourth sentence)</i></p> <p>Contracts of employment should describe advisory roles and responsibilities, state professional independence of occupational health professionals and contain the guidance on the legal, contractual and ethical aspects. Approaches for the management of conflict, access to medical records and the protection of confidential information should also be addressed.</p>
<p>Promoting ethics and professional conduct</p> <p>26. Occupational health professionals must seek the support and co-operation of employers, workers and their organizations, as well as of the competent authorities, professional and scientific associations and other relevant national and international organizations, for implementing the highest standards of ethics in occupational health practice.</p>