

In the production of knowledge in Occupational Health it is necessary to be committed

Contemporary discussions concerning the purpose and intention of the production of knowledge are ever more frequent. Science, Technology and Innovation (S&T&I) policies around the world are questioning the investment in academic studies that do not result in benefits to society. In the case of Brazil, the policy guidelines of the sector increasingly define in their summonses for publications the priority investigations to be funded in accordance with a considered strategic vision in National Congresses on Science, Technology and Innovation, even in the area of †health. In their content, such policies obviously do not restrict the purpose of the study to immediate application nor do they disregard the fundamental contributions of basic research, but they emphasize the role of science for human, social and economic development.

For studies on occupational health such guidelines are crucial, since the productive sectors have been introducing innovations that impact a broad spectrum of segments. They require special attention and interaction in their favor on the part of researchers, goods producers and service providers. Following the trend of increasing scientific production in Brazil in recent years within the scope of this field and in the area of public health, there has been significant growth in the number of published works that disseminate the results of research.

In accordance with the guidelines of S&T&I policies, it would therefore be appropriate to evaluate to what extent this production satisfies the explicit or implicit demands of managers and planners regarding the health-environment-work relationship. It is also relevant to assess the degree of integration between the various actors – service professionals, managers, researchers, workers' organizations – in defining the topics of study relevant to the numerous occupational health problems. It is therefore important to ask ourselves about the relevance of this voluminous production to diagnose the health conditions of this population and to implement policies and actions to improve them.

It would also be advisable to investigate two further aspects. Firstly, whether the large number of publications is not partly guided by some researchers to suit the criteria used by the 'traditional' evaluation institutions of teachers and researchers who, contrary to the guidelines of S&T&I Conferences, are guided only by a quantitative vision of production. Secondly, whether these publications, rather than emphasizing the contribution they could make to the resolution of problems, seek to respond primarily to the criteria of indexed journals as to their equally quantitative impact factor. In a brief survey of the works published in indexed journals over the last decade, it becomes clear that the vast majority of studies on occupational health is of a quantitative nature and deals with health problems. Works that address issues related to prevention and monitoring are indeed scarce.

The Brazilian Policy on Occupational Health ratified in 2012 was an important step in orienting the production of the area, satisfying a historical aspiration of professionals, researchers and workers movements. They include guiding principles, guidelines and strategies for the development of comprehensive occupational health at the three levels of management of the Unified Health System. One of its primary objectives is the broadening of monitoring systems and it enshrines an ambitious model of actions to be taken. Having this policy as a benchmark represents taking advantage of a unique opportunity to bridge the gap between academia and services in practice. It opens up perspectives for strengthening the National Network of Occupational Health in which knowledge plays a strategic role.

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