Mentally healthy workplaces: a multicomponent approach

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The workplace provides an opportunity to promote better mental health and address mental health problems.

This study aimed to assess the feasibility and acceptability of a multicomponent mental health program in coal mining workplaces.

Mental Health Problems in Industry

Mental health problems can lead to:

- Absenteeism
- Presenteeism
- Workplace injuries

Previous research in a coal mining sample found:

- 39% of employees report moderate or higher psychological distress.
- 46% of male employees report hazardous or harmful drinking.

The workplace provides an opportunity to promote better mental health and address mental health problems.
Study Design and Participants

INTERVENTION

- Working Well Mental Health Program:
  - General Awareness Training (GAT; n=1163)
  - Connector and suicide training (Peer-based support framework) (n=114)
- Supervisor and leader training (n=117)
- Policy review
Results - General Awareness and Peer Support

Significantly ↑ confidence after training:

1. To identify if a workmate was experiencing a mental health problem
2. To start a conversation about mental health
3. To help identify where to get support
4. Awareness of workplace systems for support
5. Belief that workplace tries to look after worker mental health

Scores from 1 (Not at all) to 5 (Very much).

Paired Sample t-test; all significant at p < 0.001.
Significantly ↑ confidence after training to:

1. Describe difference between mental health, mental health problems, & mental illness
2. Identify someone experiencing mental health difficulties
3. Start a conversation about mental health or concern for a workmate
4. Identify appropriate supports
5. Have an effective conversation about performance issues that may be due to mental health problems

Scores from 1 (Not at all) to 5 (Very much).
Paired Sample t-test; all significant at p < 0.001.
## Results - Policy review

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Policy reviewed</th>
<th>Summary of findings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Education and Training</td>
<td>MH training and education not consistently provided</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy and Support</td>
<td>MH implied, not explicitly identified</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Systems Review</td>
<td>Systems include MH but support implied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health Assessment</td>
<td>MH identified within personal health assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partnerships</td>
<td>Good partnership with EAP/ Occ Health services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research &amp; Development</td>
<td>Data on MH is routinely collected but limited evaluation</td>
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</tbody>
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There was commitment from management to the promotion of mental health and safety initiatives, however not all levels of the organisation were equally involved.
Summary

General Awareness and Peer Support
Well received & acceptable
Effective in increasing awareness and confidence of MH
↑ Positive view of workplace as caring and supportive environment

Supervisor Training
↑ Mental Health Literacy
↑ Confidence in having conversations
What have we learnt?

• To face challenge of addressing Mental health in the workplace:
  – Importance of a focus on mental health
  – Importance of role peers play

• Success based on
  – evidence-based programs & services,
  – embedded within workplace policy &
  – undertaken with a robust organisation-wide strategic approach.

• Occupational therapists can assist workplaces with implementation