



Developing WHO Guidelines for Protecting Workers from Potential Risks of Manufactured Nanomaterials

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1

Workplace hazards: Why do we need action at international level?

- **G**lobalization is a reality: global production of goods has created a global workforce
- **L**egal considerations
- **E**thical responsibility of governments & the private sector to ensure equal levels of health protection & promotion everywhere
- **M**ultinationals often produce goods in several countries
- **P**roduction often takes place in low-cost countries
- **F**airness and equity among workers in all countries

Why WHO?

- WHO is the supreme international health agency within the UN family - actions legitimized by its constitution.
- WHO's main function is "To act as the directing and coordinating authority on international health work"
- "The objective of the World Health Organization shall be the attainment by all people of the highest possible level of health."
- Health is widely defined as: "a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity"
- WHO's mandate covers all aspects of public health including occupational health
- Occupational Health has been on the WHO agenda since its inception - various resolutions of the World Health Assembly (*Resolution WHA 60.26 "Workers' Health Global Plan of Action"*)

What does WHO do in practice in the field of occupational health?

- Provide policy guidance
- Recommend actions and interventions based on sound scientific evidence
- Support Member States in implementing appropriate actions to protect and promote workers' health
- No prescription of particular actions
- Evidence-based guidelines

Why Nanomaterials?

- **Emerging technology** with increasing use patterns worldwide
- **Risks not fully evaluated**
- **Information** is not available in an equal and equitable manner
- Need to provide the **same level of protection** to workers dealing with nanomaterials across the world
- Global, science-based guidelines provide health protection activities in countries

A WHO guideline.....

- **assists** policy makers or other stakeholders to make **informed decisions**
- **contains** recommendations about health interventions (clinical, public health or policy)
- WHO has adopted internationally recognized standards and methods for guideline development to ensure that guidelines are **free from bias, meet a public health need**

A recommendation

- **Provides information** about what policy-makers, health-care providers or patients should do
- **Implies a choice** between different interventions that have an impact on health and that have implications for the use of resources.

Principles of recommendations:

- based on a comprehensive and objective assessment of the available evidence.
- Protocolled process of how, by whom, and on what basis a recommendation has been developed.

Guideline Process

- Relevant Question
- PECO (**P**opulation/situation-**E**xposure-**C**omparison-**O**utcome) Question
 - Answerable with research
- ***Systematic Review***
 - ***Protocol***
 - ***Evidence summary / profiles***
 - ***Judgement of the quality of the evidence (GRADE)***
- Recommendations (GRADE – **G**radings of **R**ecommendations, **A**ssessment, **D**evelopment and **E**valuation)

Quality of the evidence: GRADE

- Strongly **evidence-based**
- GRADE **rates** the quality of the evidence:
 - the extent to which we have ***confidence in an estimate of the effect***
- Can be applied to risk or aetiology reviews
- Used to **judge** the strength of a recommendation

WHO Guidelines on "Protecting Workers from Potential Risks of Manufactured Nanomaterials" (NANO-H)

- **Aim:** facilitate improvements in occupational health and safety of nanotechnologies in a broad range of manufacturing and social environments by incorporating elements of a risk assessment and risk management framework and contextual issues in the guidelines structure.
- **Target group:** 1st phase: policy-makers in low and medium income countries; 2nd phase: implementation guide for employers and workers

Rationale

- Production processes often simple and unprotected in low- and medium-income countries
- Sufficient information available to provide interim recommendations and guidance about approaches to nanomaterial handling in the workplace (applying the precautionary principle).
- Use existing guidelines and research (OECD, ISO...)

- *10 guideline questions developed on*
 - **Prioritization** of nanomaterials to reducing risks
 - **Hazard categories** and control banding for safe handling
 - **Highest exposure** situations and assessments
 - **Risk management** through training, health surveillance, risk mitigation, effectiveness of control measures

Involved groups

- Guidelines Development Group
 - methodologist
 - chair/co-chair
- Steering Group
- External Reviewers
- **Systematic Reviewers**

Concluding remarks: Systematic evidence review and rating

WHO guidelines are science-based and are developed using transparent systematic-review process. Systematic evidence review includes the following steps:

- ❑ Systematic collection of evidence for each key question in the form of published data;
- ❑ Rating quality of evidence using GRADE

Contributors

- *National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), USA (Scientific Chair)*
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 - WHO Steering Group members (2 from HQ, 1 from EURO)