

## **Mentally healthy workplaces: a multicomponent approach**

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**Introduction:** Mental illness can impact the workplace through absenteeism, presenteeism and workplace injuries. Workplaces provide opportunities to promote better mental health and address mental health problems.

**Objectives:** To examine the acceptability and feasibility of using evidence-based initiatives to address mental health problems in industry.

**Methods:** In a case controlled study, employees from four workplaces participated in the Working Well Mental Health Program consisting of general awareness education; a peer-based support framework; supervisor training; and a workplace policy review. Survey data was collected before and after at control and intervention sites.

**Results:** The program identified positive changes in knowledge, attitudes and help-seeking behaviours in workers. Workers who completed training showed significant improvements in confidence in identifying workmates with mental health problems and support available, and willingness to start a conversation with a workmate. Supervisors (n=117) were more confident to: identify someone experiencing mental health problems; have an effective conversation about performance issues that may be due to mental health problems; and recommend support services. The policy review identified commitment from management to the promotion of mental health and safety initiatives, however not all levels of the organisation were equally involved.

**Conclusions:** Evidence-based initiatives embedded within workplace policy and undertaken with an organisation-wide strategic approach can achieve positive health and safety outcomes for workers. The findings from this study support the importance of both a focus on mental health and the role peers can play in addressing mental health problems in the workplace. Occupational therapists can assist workplaces in implementing such approaches.