Mentally healthy workplaces: a multicomponent approach

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Mental Health Problems in Industry

Mental health problems can lead to…

↑ Increased

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

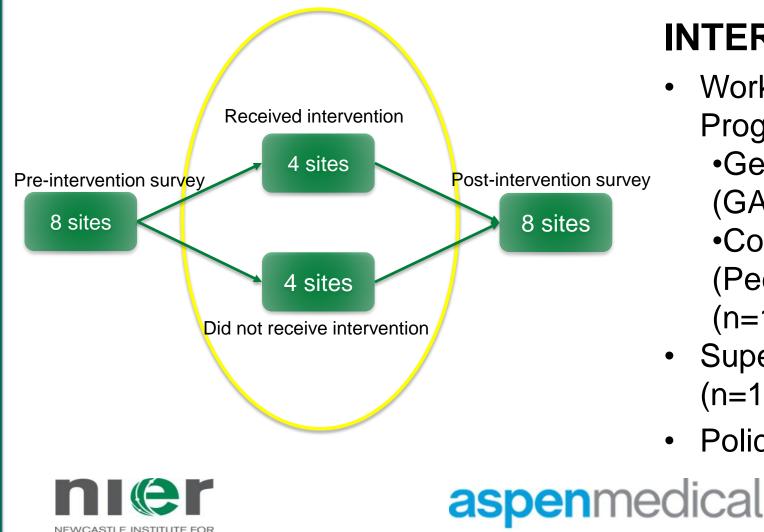The workplace provides an opportunity to promote better mental health and address mental health problems

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

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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

Training

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

Paired Sample t-test; all significant at p < 0.001.

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

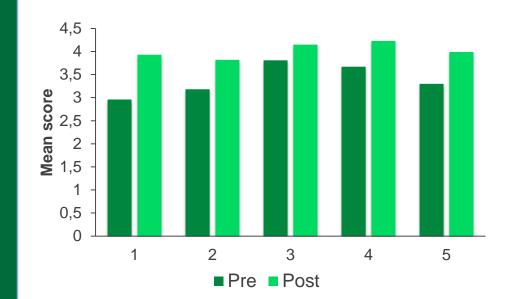5. Belief that workplace tries to look after worker mental health

Results- Supervisor Training

Supervisor Training

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

Results- Policy review

Policy reviewed	Summary of findings
Education and Training	MH training and education not consistently provided
Policy and Support	MH implied, not explicitly identified
Systems Review	Systems include MH but support implied
Health Assessment	MH identified within personal health assessment
Partnerships	Good partnership with EAP/ Occ Health services
Research & Development	Data on MH is routinely collected but limited evaluation

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