

Attribuzioni e nuove responsabilità del Medico Competente

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KEY WORDS

Alcohol dependence; health surveillance; legislation; work settings

SUMMARY

«**Occupational physicians' new attributions and responsibilities**». **Background:** *With the introduction in Italy of the Law regarding alcohol abuse and addiction (Law No.125/01), new tasks and responsibilities were assigned to occupational physicians. This law establishes that in working activities with a high risk of industrial accidents, or which may cause a risk for the safety and health of others, workers are forbidden to consume alcoholic beverages during working hours. In addition, occupational physicians are asked to play a key role in testing workers for alcohol levels. In March 2006 a specific list of job titles was issued which makes the law effective.* **Discussion and conclusions:** *The application of this law gives rise to various consequences and ambiguities, in particular for occupational physicians, mainly concerning the identification of workers with alcohol problems, the subsequent control of such workers, including proposals for valid rehabilitation programmes, and assessment of residual work fitness. All these aspects can, to some extent, produce conflicts between privacy rights and the need to ensure the health and safety of workers and third parties. A specific screening package is proposed for the identification of alcohol abuse as well as methods to overcome some of the constraints. Specific and effective guidelines need to be issued by scientific societies and health authorities.*