

5-2-2008

Contributions of Social Medicine to Occupational Health

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Recommended Citation

Noriega, M.; M. Cruz; and M. Garduño. "Contributions of Social Medicine to Occupational Health." (2008).
https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/lasm_cucs_en/78

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DOCUMENT CUCS # 47A

SPNE20049(17)Noriega-Cruz-Garduño

Noriega M, Cruz M, Garduño M. *Aportes de la Medicina Social a la Salud en el Trabajo*. [Contributions of Social Medicine to Occupational Health]. *Salud Problema (Mexico City)* 2004 July-December; 9(17): 47-56.

Objectives: To reflect on the role of social medicine in occupational health, and on the situation and system currently experienced by workers in Latin America.

Methodology: Descriptive analytical

Results: The role that social medicine played was originally one of initiating a critical debate from the theoretical standpoint of censuring the logic of capital, distancing itself from the framework of the medical establishment and industry. The authors claim that occupational health, by understanding health in more than merely biological and individualistic terms, has shown that societal relationships in industry determine which health conditions and specific problems arise. In addition to immediate, direct causes of harm in the field of occupational health, invisible causes are acknowledged in recognition of the objective and subjective characteristics of different jobs. The authors show that the neoliberal model has contributed to deterioration in the living, working, and health conditions of workers in Latin America. In addition, health services have been privatized and benefits reduced and/or cut, showing that in terms of health care provision, the neoliberal model is less efficient for workers and their families than previous economic models.

Conclusions: The authors criticize the patent decrease in government regulation of employer–worker relations. New methods of studying occupational health, with increased participation by workers contributing their knowledge, are needed.