242 PROMOTING PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AT THE WORKPLACE: A GLOBAL VIEW

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Chronic disease has become a global phenomenon affecting developing and developed countries alike. According to the WHO (2008), non-communicable diseases cause 38 million deaths annually (70% of all global deaths when adding injuries), which is estimated to increase. In India, chronic diseases account for 53% of all deaths (2005) which will further increase by 18% by 2015. Deaths from diabetes will increase by 35%. The economic impact is massive: India is projected to lose \$237 billion in national income due to chronic disease. The WHO has identified four related risk factors to address: tobacco use, unhealthy diets, physical inactivity and the

harmful use of alcohol. This paper will highlight the current global efforts to promote physical activity with a focus on the workplace. The workplace has been identified as a key setting to tackle the chronic disease challenge and accordingly workplace health promotion is experiencing significant growth. While approaches differ from country to country business drivers and targeted health issues are quite similar across the globe according to the most recent Global Survey on Health Promotion and Workplace Wellness Strategies. For example, employers worldwide use physical activity as a means to improve productivity and reduce healthcare costs. Several global initiatives in workplace health promotion have been launched, for example, the World Economic Forum Working Towards Wellness Initiative and the International Association for Worksite Health Promotion. Physical activity plays a key role in these initiatives due to the enormous potential to make lifestyle challenges and reduce chronic disease. The chronic disease challenge remains daunting and will intensify in emerging countries, like China and India. Therefore, additional resources need to be invested and initiatives strengthened on a local, regional and global scale.