

Outcomes of Food Handlers' Medical Examinations Conducted at An Occupational Health Clinic in Zimbabwe

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Abstract

Food handlers' medical examinations are mandated by most countries as a way of safeguarding the health and safety of consumers. Food-borne diseases are an important cause of morbidity and mortality. In Zimbabwe, the use of chest radiographs and throat and rectal swab tests are a requirement during food handlers' medical examinations. This study aimed at exploring the patterns and outcomes of physical medical examinations, chest radiographs, and other tests of food handlers. A cross-sectional review of retrospective occupational health records was carried out. The mean age for the study population was 37 years with an age range of 21 to 56 years. Males accounted for 73% of the study participants. All of the 157 rectal swabs were normal and did not culture any organism. Fifteen percent (24) of the throat swabs cultured one or more organisms. Ninety-seven percent of chest radiographs were normal. Ninety-seven percent of employees were certified as fit. Thirty-six percent of the food handlers were in the overweight and obese categories. Hypertension and high blood pressure were common conditions in the study sample. It can be concluded that routine radiological and laboratory testing of the food handlers in this study was of little value.