

# Challenges and achievements of occupational health in Korea

EunA Kim<sup>1</sup>

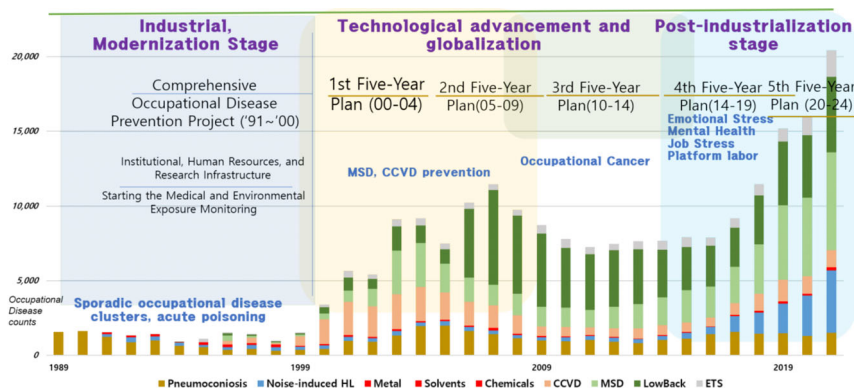
<sup>1</sup>Occupational Safety and Health Research Institute

**Purpose :** Presenting the outcomes, and limitations of the occupational disease prevention policies, for each stage of economic development, using the case of South Korea.

**Introduction:** The development of occupational health policies is often dependent on the political and economic context, particularly as key issues change with shifts in the labor market. South Korea's experiences with industrial health policies over the past century hold significant value in sharing with Asian countries.

**Result:** Occupational disease prevention policies in South Korea have evolved across different stages of industrial development. In the early industrialization(1960s~70s), The occurrence of occupational disease clusters has created sporadic social issues and there was limited focus on prevention. During the industrialization and modernization stage(1980s~90s), workplace safety standards improved, and awareness of occupational health risks increased. With technological advancement and globalization (2000s~early 2010s), policies became more advanced, targeting hazardous substances, chronic work-related condition(MSD, CCVDs) and occupational cancers. In the post-industrialization (late 2010s~), emphasis shifted to work-life balance and mental health support. Challenges remain in implementation and enforcement. In recent years, there has been an increase in labor markets that go beyond traditional labor-management relationships, raising doubts about the effectiveness of existing occupational disease prevention policies. Consequently, there is an effort to shift the paradigm of the policies towards encouraging autonomous prevention activities by workers and employers. Reflection on the effectiveness of occupational health policies has also led to stronger penalties for companies, manifested in the enactment of the Act on the Aggravated Punishment of Specific Economic Crimes, which aims to enhance punishments for major accidents.

**Conclusion :** Experiences in South Korea are a potential source of learning for Asian countries, as they may currently undergo or encounter similar changes in the future. It is hoped that ACOH will serve an opportunity to promote occupational disease prevention for Asian workers.



Chronological Change of the Occupational Health Policy and Occupational Disease Compensation of Korea

**Keywords :** Occupational Health Policy, Korea, Chronological change