

Ethnographic Evaluation of a Promotora Program to Reduce Occupational Injuries Among Latino Poultry Processing Workers

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Background

- Poultry processing is a dangerous industry
 - Injury rate: 5.5/100 workers
 - Illness rate: 2.3/100 workers
- Workers: minority, primarily immigrants
- Focused in the South (Georgia, Arkansas, Alabama, Mississippi, North Carolina)
 - 70% of U.S. Production
 - Most plants are non-union

Problem

- ❑ Rates of injuries are high
- ❑ Companies are uncooperative
- ❑ Immigrant workers face cultural and language barriers to health and safety education

* * How do you promote health and safety when you can't get inside the plant?

Purpose of Presentation

- Describe a promotora program developed to address the problem
- Evaluate the effect of the program
 - On changing attitudes toward health and safety and workers' rights
 - On the promotoras themselves

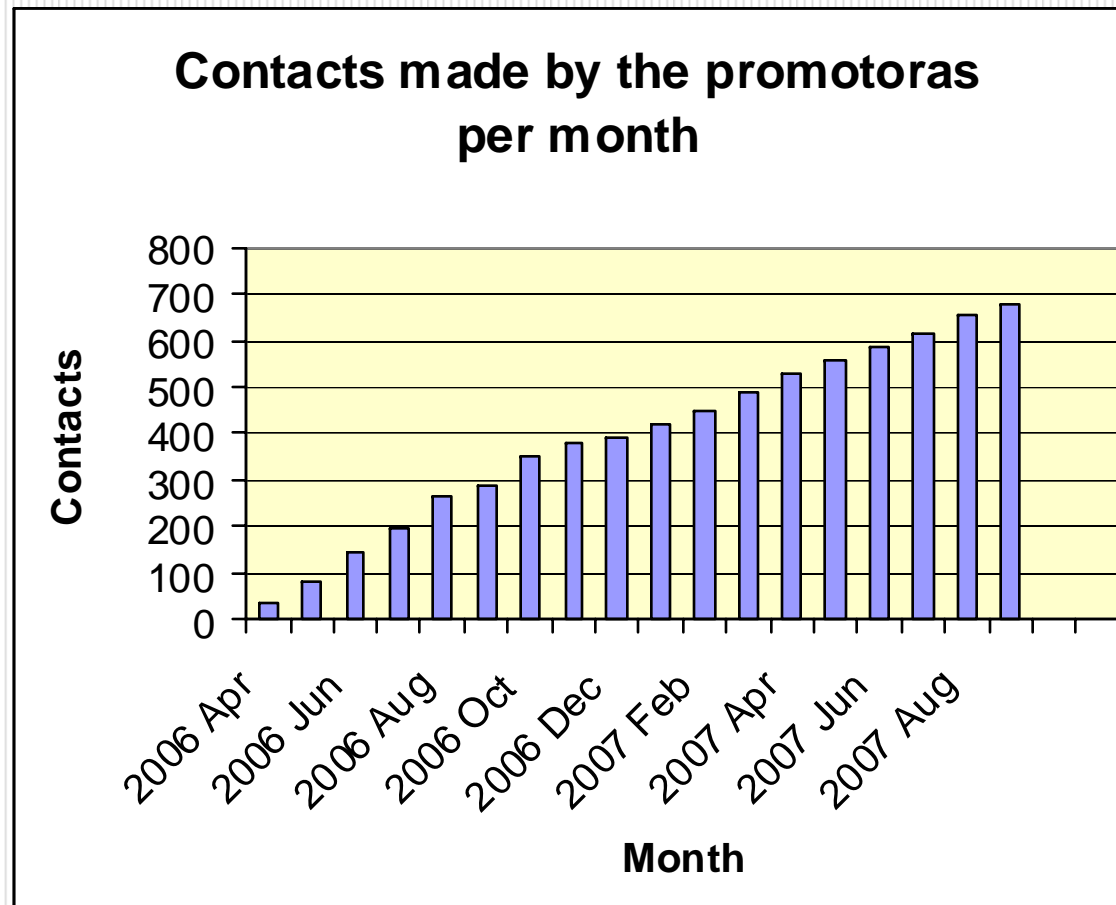
CBPR/EJ-based Solution

- Lay health advisor program
 - Promotoras de salud
 - Curriculum included:
 - Prevention and treatment of musculoskeletal injuries
 - Worker solidarity in avoiding injuries
 - Workers' rights
 - Lessons delivered in community settings: story-telling approach supported by low-literacy flipcharts
 - Promotoras work 6 hr/wk (\$10/hr)
 - Write notes of experiences and participate in weekly debriefing
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Recruiting Promotoras

- We recruited the promotoras through our contacts in the communities
 - Goal: four promotoras
 - Two promotoras from original group remain
 - Others replaced: moved or found other opportunities
 - Total of 8 promotoras have worked over 1.5 years
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Delivering Messages to the Community



Promotoras and Supervisors Observe Changing Behavior and Attitudes

“Before listening to the lessons, people were afraid to fight for their rights. Now, however, they have the courage to do so.”

“One Latino said: In the department where I used to work, the supervisor yelled and screamed at us or asked us to do the harder jobs. When we found out that we have rights, we complained to higher management. Since then, the supervisor started treating us better.”

Silvia, promotora and poultry worker

Personal Development of Promotoras: Their Words

- "I have found the courage to grow as a person, and I feel that my self-esteem has improved."
 - "I've become more aware of the problems the Latino community faces. I feel I'm helping out."
 - "I've learned to listen to people."
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Personal Development of Promotoras: Our Observations

- Promotoras proud of their economic contribution to family
 - Have money to spend independent of husband
 - New opportunities based on skills acquired
 - Instructor for local literacy program
 - Office staff of workers center
 - Promotora “promoted” in poultry plant
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Challenges

- ❑ Promotoras are sometimes “stood up”
 - ❑ Some people are afraid the company will find out they are listening to the stories and will retaliate against them.
 - ❑ Some people just don’t want to participate.
 - ❑ Sometimes it’s hard to communicate with the listeners because Spanish is not their first language.
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Summary

- Reaching immigrant poultry workers is difficult due to barriers set up by companies
 - A promotora program is an effective way of informing workers
 - Long term change of injury reduction difficult to measure
 - More immediate change in workers' attitudes and in promotoras is evident
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