

## SHORTFALL IN HEARING CONSERVATION PROGRAM AMONG FOGGERS IN KULAI DISTRICT HEALTH OFFICE

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### ABSTRACT

*INTRODUCTION: The hearing conservation program (HCP) is part of the medical surveillance among foggers due to their continuous exposure to loud noises. Training, scheduling of work, and appropriately fitted personal protective equipment were provided to reduce the risk of noise-induced hearing loss (NIHL) among foggers. However, in the latest audiometry surveillance, more than half of the foggers in Kulai produced abnormal results. OBJECTIVE: To identify the shortcomings in the hearing conservation program among foggers in Kulai district. METHODOLOGY: This qualitative study uses a focused group discussion (FGD) method. Foggers with at least 1-year working experience in Kulai who obtained abnormal audiometry results in 2023 were identified and interviewed by medical doctors with experience in occupational health. They were then referred to the ENT Clinic for a formal audiometry assessment. A thematic approach was used to correlate their response. RESULTS: A total of 17 foggers were recruited for the FGD. Only two (11.7%) foggers were confirmed to have NIHL after review by an ENT specialist. The discrepancy in the audiometry results was identified and grouped into 2 broad themes namely technical limitation and staff awareness. The absence of an audiometry machine and noise technician together with a non-systematic record-keeping of medical surveillance data creates an opportunity for erroneous audiometry results with no baseline to compare. Additionally, the foggers view the HCP as secondary to their workload due to the burden of work. Thus, leading to multiple violations of the acceptable duration of exposure to loud noise. CONCLUSION: The HCP in Kulai District Health Office has areas for improvement including staff awareness and provision of better audiometry tests. The surveillance must be systematic and follow standard procedures to ensure effective health management for employees as mandated by the Occupational Safety and Health Act 1994.*

Keywords: Hearing conservation program, Noise-induced hearing loss, Foggers, Audiometry

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