The Virtual World: A Challenge for On-Site Action in Ergonomics

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INTRODUCTION

The Reasons Why: This article reflects on the strategies developed by an Ergonomics Team facing the impossibility of observing the work in the field, due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Thus, we were in a dilemma:

• How to avoid the work situation without infringing a biocybernetic standard based on the collective consciousness?
• How to maintain the dialogical action and participant observation in the face of impediments to proximate contact?

The theoretical basis is Activity Ergonomics[1–4]. Its object is the situation where work occurs, and its purpose, the transformation of the system for the better. Transformation occurs through collective construction of proposals for the improvement of working conditions aimed at workers’ health and safety[5–7].

The ERGONOMIST WORK TRANSFORMATION

The Original Methodology. We employ Ergonomic Analysis of Work Activity (EAWA)[6, 7, 8, 9], that provides a system to observe and interact with workers to transform work situations for the better. The Institutional Practice of EAWA is structured in 6 stages listed and described below, as explained by Ricart[10–13].

Thus, we were able to compose a hybrid methodology that has in its scope:

• The impossibility of observing the work in the field, due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Thus, we were in

The sharing of experiences on the adaptations and innovations generated to enable the work in this scenario aims to contribute to the enrichment of the field of ergonomics. In addition, we could reflect on our practice, and provide discourse. It is a fact that on-site observation is irreplaceable. However, in its impossibility, we were able to use the available resources to promote conversations about the work as well, at some level, work transformations.

CONCLUSIONS

The context presented brings to light the potential for adjustment to the variability imposed upon the work activity of both the ergonomicist, and the workers. We all need to rebuild ways of working and relating to work and the work collective.

If, on the one hand, the new method allowed us to perform ergonomic action in different places, on the other, several difficulties can be identified. The SWOT Matrix below outlines this relationship.