

**School:** ATEC – Medical Management  
**Course:** Total Worker Health® as a Conceptual Approach Towards Worker Well-being  
**Faculty:** Dr. Robert Emery, Professor of Occupational Health, University of Texas School of Public Health

### **Summary**

In the course "Total Worker Health® as a Conceptual Approach Towards Worker Well-being," Dr. Robert Emery from the University of Texas School of Public Health introduces the concept of Total Worker Health® (TWH), emphasizing its significance for promoting comprehensive worker well-being. Dr. Emery discusses the need for integrating health promotion with occupational health and safety to advance worker health and recovery.

Dr. Emery begins by explaining that Total Worker Health® is a trademarked term representing a holistic approach to worker health. The goal is to move beyond the current system and address future challenges related to worker well-being and recovery. He emphasizes the importance of understanding emerging issues and fostering discussions among professionals to collectively work towards these objectives.

A key part of the presentation is the discussion on the Human Genome Project, which mapped the entire human genome, identifying approximately 20,000-25,000 human genes. Dr. Emery highlights that only about 10% of human diseases are caused by genetic factors, with the remaining 90% attributed to environmental factors. This underscores the importance of considering environmental exposures, which play a significant role in worker health.

Dr. Emery introduces the concept of the exposome, which encompasses all environmental exposures an individual encounters from conception to death. These exposures include diet, exercise, personal habits, stress, and workplace environmental issues. Understanding the exposome is crucial for addressing non-genetic causes of diseases, illnesses, injuries, and fatalities.

The course emphasizes the need for clear boundaries and guardrails in workplace health initiatives. Dr. Emery discusses the potential challenges and ambiguities in defining and implementing wellness programs, such as the varying interpretations of terms like wellness, worker well-being, and Total Worker Health®. He highlights the importance of establishing clear guidelines to avoid overstepping professional boundaries and ensure effective program implementation.

Dr. Emery also addresses the business perspective, noting that organizations invest in health and safety programs, workers' compensation insurance, and benefits programs. This investment underscores the need for comprehensive wellness initiatives that extend beyond workplace safety to include overall worker well-being. He emphasizes the importance of cross-departmental collaboration and cultural acceptance for successful Total Worker Health® programs.

The presentation contrasts traditional occupational health, which focuses on reducing workplace hazards and complying with regulations, with Total Worker Health®, which also includes promoting healthy behaviors and reducing total risks. Dr. Emery highlights the importance of integrating various programs, such as employee assistance programs and mental health initiatives, to advance worker well-being.

Dr. Emery discusses a survey conducted among safety professionals, revealing that 82% had not heard of Total Worker Health®. This finding underscores the need for education and awareness about TWH initiatives. He advocates for incorporating TWH concepts into academic curricula and professional development to prepare future safety professionals.

The course concludes with a discussion on measuring the impact of Total Worker Health® programs. Dr. Emery emphasizes the need for identifying key performance indicators and conducting gap analyses to assess program effectiveness. He encourages ongoing dialogue and collaboration among professionals to develop best practices and address emerging challenges in worker health.

In summary, Dr. Emery's course provides a comprehensive overview of Total Worker Health®, highlighting the importance of integrating health promotion with occupational health and safety practices. The presentation underscores the need for clear boundaries, cross-departmental collaboration, and ongoing education to effectively promote worker well-being and recovery.

### **Learning Objectives**

1. Understand the concept and significance of Total Worker Health® in promoting worker well-being.
2. Identify the impact of environmental factors on worker health and the importance of addressing these in workplace programs.
3. Learn about the Human Genome Project and the exposome, and their relevance to occupational health.
4. Explore strategies for integrating health promotion with occupational health and safety practices.

5. Gain knowledge on the role of safety professionals in Total Worker Health® initiatives and the importance of establishing clear boundaries and guardrails.

### **Primary Takeaways**

1. Total Worker Health® emphasizes the integration of health promotion with workplace safety to enhance overall worker well-being.
2. Environmental factors, rather than genetic coding, are the primary cause of most diseases and injuries, underscoring the need for comprehensive workplace health programs.
3. The Human Genome Project and the concept of the exposome highlight the importance of understanding both genetic and environmental impacts on health.
4. Effective Total Worker Health® programs require cross-departmental collaboration and the involvement of various stakeholders, including safety professionals.
5. Establishing clear boundaries and understanding the roles of different professionals are crucial for the successful implementation of Total Worker Health® initiatives.

### **Course Outline**

- 1) Introduction to Total Worker Health®
  - a) Importance of worker well-being
  - b) Objectives of the session
- 2) The Human Genome Project
  - a) Overview of the Human Genome Project
  - b) Significance of genetic research
  - c) Impact on healthcare and disease understanding
- 3) The Exposome
  - a) Definition and relevance
  - b) Interaction of environmental factors with genetics
  - c) Importance in occupational health
- 4) Environmental Factors and Worker Health
  - a) Impact of environmental factors on health
  - b) Examples of environmental exposures
  - c) Strategies for addressing environmental factors
- 5) Integrating Health Promotion and Occupational Health

- a) Definition of Total Worker Health®
  - b) Importance of integration
  - c) Elements of effective workplace health programs
- 6) Role of Safety Professionals
- a) Involvement in Total Worker Health® initiatives
  - b) Importance of cross-departmental collaboration
  - c) Establishing clear boundaries and guardrails
- 7) Challenges and Considerations
- a) Defining wellness initiatives
  - b) Potential problems and solutions
  - c) Measuring the impact of Total Worker Health® programs
- 8) Conclusion
- a) Recap of key points
  - b) Importance of ongoing discussion and collaboration
  - c) Resources and further reading

NOTE: Artificial Intelligence was used in the creation of this document.