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ABSTRACT BOOK

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In Azerbaijan, important work is underway to study pharmaceutical law from the point of view of regulating pharmaceutical activities, protecting public health and ensuring drug safety. Significant efforts are being made to study pharmaceutical law as it relates to establishing a normative-legal framework for the production, distribution, and use of medicines while considering ecological impacts. Pharmaceutical ecology ensures the protection of the environment from pharmaceutical waste and aligns this process with principles of sustainable development, incorporating bioethical approaches. The integration of these fields in Azerbaijan is essential for the protection of both the environment and human health.

RARE DISEASES & MENTAL HEALTH CHALLENGES AT GLANCE – OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH PERSPECTIVE

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Living with rare diseases poses significant challenges for persons affected. Around 6% of the world's population lives with rare diseases, although a small number of people are affected by a single rare disease. Apart from health care issues related to delay in diagnosis and treatment, lack of appropriate funding and consequently coordinated care, people with rare diseases are facing mental health challenges. The absence of holistic and integrated psychosocial support throughout the medical process adversely affects various functional aspects of the individual, including their professional life.

Recent studies indicate a significantly higher prevalence of mental health disorders among individuals with rare diseases compared to the general population. This vulnerable group faces increased challenges, including limited access to treatment and diagnosis, as well as reduced employment opportunities. Consequently, they are more susceptible to discrimination and inequality.

The working conditions for individuals with rare diseases must be adapted to their health needs, especially concerning mental health and well-being. This aligns with the European Union's innovative approach to a comprehensive, prevention-oriented mental health policy that treats mental health equally with physical health. This policy encompasses all relevant areas, including employment, education, digitalization, culture, the environment, and climate. Therefore, by the adoption of the Communication on Comprehensive Approach to Mental Health on 7 June 2023, the European Commission launched a state-of-the-art mental health initiative, prioritizing mental health across all policies, emphasizing not only public health but also the importance of employment and labor fields besides others for mental health promotion. By targeting non-communicable diseases that include also

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mental and neurological disorders although not specifying particularly the category of rare diseases, this document stresses the unequal distribution of mental health problems between population groups, especially those labeled as vulnerable. In this context, individuals with rare diseases represent a vulnerable group of particular interest.

The paper deals with occupational safety and health (OSH) issues of rare disease workers by applying a worker-centered human rights approach pointing out the significance of psychosocial risk assessment and management in the workplace. Discrimination as a traditional psychosocial risk, combined with changes in work organization driven by workplace automatization, has raised growing concerns about maintaining decent work standards for health-vulnerable workers. Thus, intersectionality and genetic discrimination will be addressed as key OSH concerns for workers with rare diseases, who face heightened psychosocial risks due to stigma, exclusion, and limited workplace accommodation.