

# Safety is a Garden We Tend Together

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Who would be more susceptible to an infectious disease? Person A was vaccinated but lives surrounded by people not vaccinated; Person B was not inoculated but lives surrounded by many people inoculated. The answer is Person A.

If lots of people already had the antibody, the virus would not freely move around and stop spreading soon. Thanks to the mechanism, people not vaccinated can be also prevented from the infection. We call this “herd immunity.”

The concept was first applied in the 1930s, and now attracts attention again as the infected number of COVID-19 has exceeded 340,000 (as of March 23) around the globe. Society is liable for our health and its debts. In a book entitled “On Immunity,” the author Eula Biss introduces the concept “herd immunity” and states that “immunity is a garden we tend together.”

Safety can also be a garden we tend together. However, safety is not always secured even if each worker takes care of it. As industrial techniques have been sophisticated and more complicated, one accident is intertwined with

many direct and indirect elements. Dangers do not originate from individuals, but from “structural issues.” We need to focus on creating a safe environments in a structural manner, rather than making individuals care for. Safety is the area that our society tends and shares together.

A viral antibody comes from vaccines taken at hospitals. Hospitals contributing to creating a safe community already exist. The Occupational Safety & Health Act of Korea was completely revised in 28 years, and enforced since January 16 of this year. The amended Act was proposed to prevent accidents as is the case of the deceased Kim Yong-kyun who was exposed to danger as a sub-subcontracting worker. The revised Act has not only widened the coverage of subjects to legal protection and entities of occupational accidents, but also reinforced preventive obligations. Hence, the foundation has been laid out to cover safety blind spots. The Act has opened the ways for every worker to enjoy his/her rights to be safe and healthy.

It is time to take actions. In this regard, KOSHA is playing as a vaccine to implement patrol projects. Vaccination is a technique, which debilitates a certain disease and activates the immune system. Then, it may prevent more severe diseases. The patrol project is to find out risk factors and strengthen safety immunity. For instance, we unexpectedly inspect any hazards on industrial sites to prevent lethal incidents such as a fall or a trap. Regarding serious accidents, a myriad of issues were interwoven with structural elements. The project aims to closely observe any hazards, analyze the root causes and direct the sites to correct them.

Some people may feel reluctant to getting vaccines due to side effects. Likewise, some concerns also arise from negative impacts on businesses as the government reinforces the safety inspection. Nevertheless, such concerns are alleviated by findings of inspections from 1996 to 2006, for which California Occupational Safety & Health Administration in the US randomly inspected facilities. In 2012, David Levine and other researchers published the paper entitled “Randomized Government Safety Inspections Reduce Worker Injuries with No Detectable Job Loss” in the journal Science. Indeed, the government’s inspections contributed to decreasing worker injuries by 9.4%, but have not noticeably affected employment and sales for companies. The study may reflect diverse time or environments, but it is a meaningful precedent for the communal safety.

The confirmed cases in Korea have already exceeded 9,000. Each individual should wash hands thoroughly and wear masks to block infection routes. KOSHA has supplied Personal Protective Equipments and protective clothing to Daegu and Northern Gyeongsang Province, designated as special disaster areas. In addition, we will provide funds for nation-wide call centers with vulnerable working environments to install partitions. Thanks to the power of communal immunity, the number of those who have been recovered outpaced that of confirmed patients. KOSHA is working as a vaccine to strengthen immunity not only for the coronavirus but also for general safety. We look forward to overcoming the pandemic before long and tending workplace safety together. <END>