

E D I T O R I A L

Psychosocial working conditions in today's workplaces: towards an increased specificity in risk assessment and management

Attualità dei contesti lavorativi: verso una maggior specificità nella valutazione e gestione del rischio psicosociale

New trends of the contemporary world of work, including the increasing globalization and flexibilization of the labour market, the occurrence of significant demographic shifts in the workforce as well as the predominance of the service sector, have profoundly affected the way work is today organized and managed. Parallel to these transformations, new risks and challenges have emerged in the field of occupational health and safety.

One of the major changes is undoubtedly represented by the growing role played by risks linked to the psychosocial work environment and the associated work-related stress in relation to employees' health and well-being. In response to this evidence, most EU countries, including Italy, have in recent years established norms to regulate the assessment and management of psychosocial risk factors at the workplace.

However, best practices in risk assessment and management are strongly dependent on the quality and precision of knowledge available. Despite cumulating evidence about the negative impact of adverse work characteristics on health and well-being, there is still a limited understanding of socio-demographic, occupational and organizational differences in psychosocial exposure. Such a lack of specificity may negatively affect the development of well-targeted interventions to combat psychosocial risks at work.

To contribute in this respect, this special issue of *La Medicina del Lavoro* hosts a selection of empirical articles whose main focus is to look into different groups of the working population and examine the presence of specific psychosocial risk configurations within them. In the first article, through the analysis of a highly representative sample of the European workforce, Ardito et al. (1) showed that among women and men mental health is influenced by different sets of psychosocial risk factors at work, demonstrating how crucial is taking gender issues into account in the context of risk assessment. In the second contribution, Balducci et al. (2), by examining a sample of registered nurses, highlighted the limitations of using instruments that fail to measure emotional demands, a crucial psychosocial factor in the contemporary service-dominated economy. The third article, written by Porru et al. (5), emphasized the heavy burden of psychiatric morbidity among immigrants, an occupational category that, despite its exposure to remarkably unfavourable psychosocial working conditions, has received scarce attention in the scientific literature so far. In the fourth paper, Camerino et al. (3) observed the presence of significantly different psychosocial working conditions between call centre workers from two different companies, showing how organizational factors, especially the resources provided, may modify exposure even within the same occupational group. In

the fifth and last contribution of this issue, Lanfranchi et al. (4), by adopting an integrated approach to psychosocial assessment in a hospital setting, found that the use of subjective instruments, in conjunction with objective measures, can be fundamental for obtaining a more complete picture of the psychosocial work environment and identifying specific risk profiles among distinct healthcare occupations.

We hope that the articles presented in this issue will not only stimulate future studies on the topic, but will also inspire occupational health practitioners to carefully consider differences related to socio-demographic factors, occupational profiles and organizational contexts when developing interventions aiming to improve the psychosocial work environment and to safeguard employees' health and well-being.

Special issue editors

Paul Maurice Conway

Department of Psychology,

University of Copenhagen

E-mail: paul.conway@psy.ku.dk

Donatella Camerino

Department of Clinical Sciences

and Community Health,

University of Milan

E-mail: donatella.camerino@unimi.it

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