The impact of work on (un)healthy aging: How to reduce social inequalities?

Epidemiologic evidence indicates that the quality of work and employment has a direct effect on workers' health and their aging process. This holds true for material (physical) and psychosocial (mental, emotional) aspects of work. Moreover, this quality is socially graded, with lower levels among workers in lower socioeconomic positions (SEP). In this presentation, new findings on this social gradient and its effects on health are presented and discussed, with special emphasis on an adverse psychosocial work environment, as defined by the effort-reward imbalance (ERI) model. High ERI is prospectively associated with elevated risks of a variety of stress-related disorders, and these effects are often particularly strong among working people with low SEP. These theory-based findings can instruct measures towards reducing work-related health inequalities. To improve the quality of work and employment these measures need to be implemented at two levels, the organizational level of worksite health promotion in companies and the national/international level of appropriate social and labor policies.
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