



STRESS and MENTAL HEALTH: What's The Link?

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Stress at Work

Talk Outline

Workplace Stress

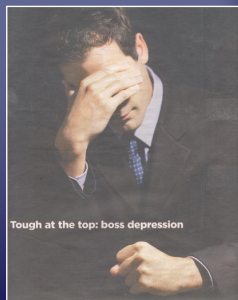
- What is it and what causes it?
- What's the cost?
- What can stress lead to?

The Scientific Research

- The Dunedin Study
- How do we measure workplace stress?
- How do we measure mental health?
- Results from around the world

Some Solutions

- What solutions can work?





Workplace Stress

What is it and what causes it?

Workplace stress takes its toll
Tsm.co.nz, 16 June 2006

Your workplace enemy is you
New York Times, 15 September 2007

Unhappy in your work? You're part of a growing trend
New Zealand Herald, 4 March 2008

Hard-working boss? Most employees disagree
New Zealand Herald, 4 March 2008

Binge-working is bad for you
Stuff.co.nz, 16 January 2008

Make a resolution to reduce workplace stress
Scoop.co.nz, 7 January 2008



Workplace Stress

What is it and what causes it?

A definition of stress:

- an *interaction* between the person and their work environment
- the awareness of *not being able to cope* with the demands of the work environment
- associated with a *negative emotional response* to that awareness

STRESS IS NOT AN ILLNESS.
 It is the awareness that an individual is not coping with stressors.

Source: Department of Labour (2003) *Healthy Work: Managing stress and fatigue in the workplace*



Workplace Stress

What are stressors?

"Events or circumstances which generally result in pressure"

Examples of stressors include...

- VERY LONG HOURS
- RELATIONSHIP PROBLEMS
- TYPE OF WORK

Source: Department of Labour (2003) *Healthy Work: Managing stress and fatigue in the workplace*



Workplace Stress

What's the cost?

Workplace stress "has reached epidemic proportions", with the costs to the USA and European countries estimated at *between 5 and 10% of GNP per annum.*

UNITED KINGDOM: In a 2006 survey of working hours involving 10,000 managers from shopfloor to boardroom level, it was found that working long hours had:

- damaged the health of respondents (56%)
- adversely affected relationship with children (54%)
- damaged relationship with spouse/partner (60%)
- negatively affected productivity at work (46%)

Sources: European Foundation (1996); Cooper (2005); Worrall & Cooper (2006)



Workplace Stress

What's the cost?

UNITED KINGDOM: The 2006 survey of 10,000 managers reported that managers who felt "less productive" averaged *10 days off per year* with sick leave, compared to 2.5 sick-days for those who felt productive and worked fewer hours.

UNITED KINGDOM: In 2002, work related stress and poor mental health passed backache as the leading cause of longterm sickness absence in industry, accounting for about *40% of the invalidity benefit paid out by the government.*

Sources: European Foundation (1996); Cooper (2005); Worrall & Cooper (2006)



Workplace Stress

What's the cost?

UNITED KINGDOM: A survey of 646 working parents found that more than half worked more hours per week than they were contracted to. The parents working longer hours complained of higher stress levels, which manifested themselves as:

- headaches (36%)
- exhaustion (35%)
- depression (28%)
- insomnia (21%)

USA: Work-related stress may account for more than 200 million lost working days every year.

Sources: Working Families Time, Health and the Family: What Working Families Want; International Labour Organisation



Workplace Stress

What's the cost?

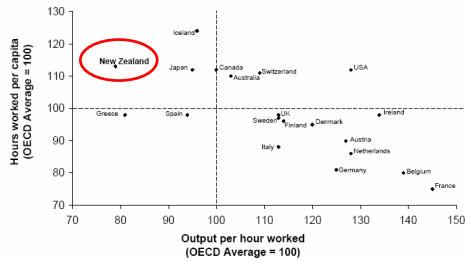
Survey released March 4, 2008 estimates that only 30% of New Zealanders are "happy in their work", and that 41% of workers are unhappy and unsatisfied with their job.

AND....

There is a very strong relationship between job satisfaction and health.

Sources: SEEK Survey of Employee Satisfaction and Motivation 2007; Faragher et al. (2005)

NEW ZEALANDERS ARE HARD WORKING BUT ARE NOT AS PRODUCTIVE AS WORKERS IN OTHER COUNTRIES



Source: Groningen Growth and Development Centre and the Conference Board, Total Economy Database, August 2005, 6



Workplace Stress

What can too much stress lead to?

Poor physical health

Poor mental health

- Generalised Anxiety Disorder
- Major Depressive Disorder



Workplace Stress Research: why it's important



- **Increasing worldwide work-stress levels:**
 - 30-40% of workers in the USA and EU
 - Similar percentages for New Zealand
- **Increasing worldwide depression levels:**
 - Depression predicted to become the 2nd leading cause of the global burden of disease by 2020.
- **Age at which both stress and depression are a problem:**
 - Dunedin Study Members are turning 35 years old
 - Time of "climbing the ladder" career-wise
 - Time of increased risk of mental illnesses, including depression and anxiety

Sources: Eurofound (2005); NIOSH (1999); World Health Organisation; Melchior et al (2007)



The Dunedin Study



“Dunedin Multidisciplinary Health and Development Study”

Has followed 1,037 Dunedin-born people since their birth in 1972-1973

Study members were seen at ages 3, 5, 7, 9, 11, 13, 15, 18, 21, 26, and 32

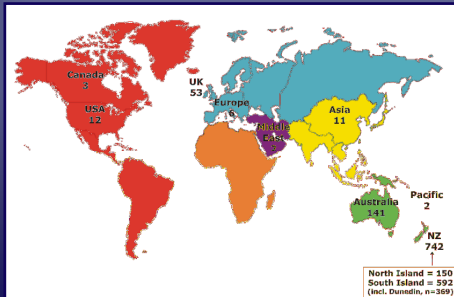
96% of the living Study Members are still involved



The Dunedin Study



“Dunedin Multidisciplinary Health and Development Study”



What does “multidisciplinary” mean?

- Socioeconomic inequalities
- Employment and work
- Personality and behaviour
- Antisocial behaviour and criminality
- Long-term consequences of child abuse
- Intergenerational relations (study members & their parents)
- Maori health/cultural identity
- Mental health (including substance abuse)
- Self-harm/coping
- Intimate relationships and domestic violence
- Dental health
- Sexual & reproductive health
- Cardiovascular risk factors
- Cardiovascular reactivity
- Respiratory functioning



Workplace Stress Research: why it's important



Swedish Multidisciplinary Health
and Development Research Unit

- Our research aimed to:**
- 1. explore and explain the potential link between workplace stress and mental health; and**
 - 2. find out the effect workplace stress can have on adults who have never had mental health disorders before.**



Workplace Stress Research: how did we measure workplace stress?



Swedish Multidisciplinary Health
and Development Research Unit

- **891 employed study members gave information about their work characteristics**
 - Psychological work demands
 - Social support systems
 - Physical work demands
 - Work decision latitude



Workplace Stress Research: how did we measure workplace stress?



Swedish Multidisciplinary Health
and Development Research Unit

- **891 employed study members gave information about their work characteristics**
 - Psychological work demands
 - Very long hours
 - Too much work
 - Time pressure / unreasonable deadlines
 - Lack of guidance or direction
 - Social support systems
 - Physical work demands
 - Work decision latitude



Workplace Stress Research: how did we measure workplace stress?



Danish Multidisciplinary Health
and Development Research Unit

- 891 employed study members gave information about their work characteristics
 - Psychological work demands
 - Social support systems
 - Lack of feedback about work performance
 - Lack of help / support from colleagues
 - Unfriendly workplace
 - No praise for good work done
 - Physical work demands
 - Work decision latitude



Workplace Stress Research: how did we measure workplace stress?



Danish Multidisciplinary Health
and Development Research Unit

- 891 employed study members gave information about their work characteristics
 - Psychological work demands
 - Social support systems
 - Physical work demands
 - Get sweaty / dirty daily at work
 - Exposure to loud noise, excessive heat or cold
 - Standing for long stretches of time
 - Exposure to dangerous machinery or materials
 - Work decision latitude



Workplace Stress Research: how did we measure workplace stress?



Danish Multidisciplinary Health
and Development Research Unit

- 891 employed study members gave information about their work characteristics
 - Psychological work demands
 - Social support systems
 - Physical work demands
 - Work decision latitude
 - Repetitive, boring work
 - No control over work decisions
 - No control over hours, holidays or breaks
 - Clock watching



Workplace Stress Research: how did we measure mental health?



- Full psychiatric exam
 - Mental health information from age 11 on
 - Major Depressive Disorder (MDD) and Generalised Anxiety Disorder (GAD)
 - Ongoing mental health problems vs. newly-diagnosed problems

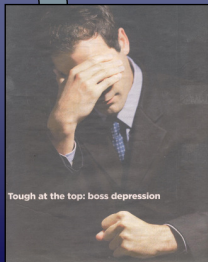


Workplace Stress Research: what we found



Men reported higher psychological job demands, lower social support, and higher physical job demands than women.

Men with high psychological job demands were 80% more likely to suffer from depression or anxiety than men with low psychological job demands





Workplace Stress Research: what we found



Women with high psychological job demands were 75% more likely to suffer from depression or anxiety than women with the lowest psychological job demands



Workplace Stress Research: what we found

High Job Demands = increased risk of depression, anxiety, or both

2 times more risk for women

Over 6 times more risk for men

Workplace Stress Research: what we found

Of all the newly diagnosed cases of depression or anxiety disorder at age 32, 45% were because of high job demands.

102 New Cases

What does this mean for New Zealand workers?

Increased Stress Levels

Increased Job Demands

Mental Disorders

Depression and Anxiety

Decreased Productivity

Increased Societal Costs

Increased Health Care Costs



What does other research say?

1. High job demands are the main work characteristic linked to depression.

A Canadian survey of over 24,000 workers from across all occupations found that workplace stress was a cause of depression in almost 5% of the cases, translating to over 700,000 Canadians when applied across the whole workforce.

The same survey singled out "high job strain", equivalent to high psychological demands combined with low work decision latitude, as the single biggest predictor of depression.

Source: Robertson Blackmore et al (2007)



What does other research say?

2. This applies across a range of occupations.

A British study of almost 10,000 public sector employees (about 30% women) found that high job demands, low social support structures, effort-reward imbalance and low decision-making latitude were associated with an increased risk in psychiatric disorders.

An American study of 2,260 factory workers (29% women) found that high job strain and lack of social support structures contributed most to poor emotional well-being and unhappiness of workers.

Source: Stanfeld et al (1999), Loscocco et al (1990)



The Solutions

Workplace interventions have been studied at three levels:

- PRIMARY: reducing stressors / organisational change
- SECONDARY: individual stress management / coping strategies
- TERTIARY: treating those already depressed



The Solutions

What do researchers agree on?

1. Secondary and tertiary interventions are effective in the short-term, for approximately three months.
2. However, secondary and tertiary interventions DO NOT address the work stressors, and do not reduce stress by themselves.
3. Primary interventions, though the hardest to implement, may help reduce anxiety and depression levels through organisation-wide reductions in work demands.
4. Some interventions that have produced results include: increasing flexibility of work, 'stress-management' seminars, individual phone/email coaching, and medication.

Sources: Melchior et al (2007), Robertson Blackmore et al (2007), Tennant (2001), Cooper & Cartwright (1997), Briner (1997)



For more information, or copies of this presentation, published papers, media release or background factsheet:

<http://www.lifecourse.ac.nz>

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