

Belkić K. and Savić Č.: "JOB STRESSORS AND MENTAL HEALTH: A PROACTIVE CLINICAL PERSPECTIVE"

The authors' long-term quest for a model which would reflect each and every facet of human labor and the work environment, as well as for measuring their potentially deleterious effects upon the human organism, resulted in the creation of the "Occupational Stressor Index", the OSI. Over decades the authors and their collaborators have applied the OSI model in practice, as presented in detail in the book. This represents invaluable experience and guidance that justify the need for widespread application of the OSI in clinical practice. Not only does the OSI explain how information processing is carried out physiologically by the human nervous system, but it does so to the finest detail of mental chronometry. Even more importantly, the OSI pinpoints untoward factors in the work environment and their harmful effects upon the human organism. The OSI incorporates aspects ("threat-avoidant vigilance" and "conflict/uncertainty") that have heretofore been unrecognized by the sociological models and whose effects are especially noxious to mental health. Through actual application in everyday work situations, one can identify precisely what needs to be changed, how these modifications can be implemented and how to promote a healthy and productive work environment. Thereby, the aim of the well-being of the worker together with productivity can effectively be achieved. These points are the essence of the book.

The clinical application of the OSI model is presented in detail. Working conditions are improved thereby for persons with mental health disorders and employed in various occupations (a psychiatrist, a teacher, a computer programmer, an oncology nurse, a control-panel worker, a professional driver, a scientist and an academic physician approaching retirement). Better work organization, i.e. harmonization between human capacities and human needs is essential to ensuring well-being for all.

The current global situation, especially in the more developed countries is such that psychosocial job stressors predominate over exposure to physical noxins. Consequently, the mental health of employed populations has become a primary concern. This is reflected in the first part of book which provides an extensive literature review concerning the effect of the work environment upon mental health disorders and other disease processes, as well as upon unhealthy lifestyle-related behaviors. Job insecurity, tenuous employment, unemployment and retirement are also considered. It is thereby demonstrated that stable employment is important for psychological well-being. Mental health disorders are not only a major public health problem, but are also a social and economic burden for society, and these require an integrative approach. This is precisely the textbook sought by physicians of all specialties to facilitate a comprehensive view and insight aimed at improving the working conditions of working patients of all profiles.

The OSI model is particularly needed by occupational medicine specialists who are daily called upon to assess work fitness of job applicants, those who are actively working, workers on sick leave and/or who have been injured, as well as for assessing high-risk jobs, fitness for driving, etc. Physicians/health providers in other specialties are also engaged in this process, particularly neuropsychiatrists, psychologists, cardiologists, *inter alia*. The need to take a detailed work history is underscored, as a vital prerequisite for gleaning indispensable insights into the cause(s) of the illness, as well as for return to healthier work after treatment. This book, together with the OSI model itself, represent a key missing link for an integrative approach to handling work-related disease, especially mental health disorders, as well as cardiovascular, malignant, rheumatologic and other diseases.

I recommend this book to all as a handbook for daily practice, for the well-being of the patients for whom we care, as well as for physicians, for our own well-being at work.

*Olesja Nedić, MD, PhD,
Primarius Physician Specialist in Occupational Medicine
Head of the Department for Worker Protection
Novi Sad Health Center*

