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## Changing Nature of Work and Worker Health: Evidence and Labor Union Interventions

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A growing body of evidence demonstrates that changes in the nature of work linked to the global economy are adversely impacting the health of workers, particularly workers in lower socioeconomic positions. The policies of trade liberalization, de-regulation, privatization, and reduction in social welfare transfer payments impact on both the labor market and organizational practices. Labor market changes in many developed countries include increases in precarious/contingent work, increases in income inequality, weaker labor unions and a smaller public sector. Changes in organizational practices include downsizing and restructuring, irregular or longer work hours, electronic monitoring, lean production and the intensification of labor, however, greater flexibility and job involvement for some workers. These trends have led to changes in work organization and job characteristics associated with worker health, such as increases in job demands/efforts/pace of work and little change or decreases in job control/rewards/social support. Related job characteristics associated with worker ill health include organizational injustice and job insecurity.

This proposed presentation will critically evaluate the research linking these trends with two of the major health problems faced by workers in developed countries, cardiovascular disease (including hypertension) and psychological disorders (including depression, anxiety and burnout). These connections between work and health are detailed in “Unhealthy Work: Causes, Consequences and Cures”, Schnall et al. (editors), Baywood Publishing, 2009. Evidence from this book will be presented, as well as new research which has appeared since the book was published.

Workers and their unions have been involved in participatory action research efforts to document these changes in working conditions and their effects on health, and, through legislative, collective bargaining and job redesign strategies, to improve working conditions and the health of workers. Case studies describing a variety of such efforts will be presented, including discussions of campaigns by unionized hotel workers, transit workers and janitors in the United States, and an international effort by transportation workers’ unions.

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