MSD prevention - Working with Chronic Progressive Diseases: outcomes of two projects on Health at Work in France

Anne-Marie Nicot
Eric Peltier
Dominique Baradat
Part 1 - Gender and health at work issues

Facts, context and the approach developed by ANACT

Anne-Marie Nicot
Facts and figures

- Gender based distribution of occupations
  - 52 % of women in 12 out of 86 professional groups (DARES)
    - Only 13 % of men in these groups
- OSH evolutions between 2000 and 2008 (CNAMTS)
  - Work accidents
    - Male : - 13 % (-15 % if referred to the employed population)
    - Female : + 21 % (+ 8 % if referred to the employed population)
  - Occupational diseases
    - Male : + 62 % (+ 59 % if referred to the employed population)
    - Female : + 125 % (+ 106 % if referred to the employed population)
- 37 % of women present a ‘psychological distress’
  - Compared to 24 % of men (InVS, Samotrace)
Gender issues at the workplace

- **On the side of employers**
  - No demand on gender issues, even less on ‘gender and health’
  - Strong tendency to naturalize male and female’s features
  - Gender issues are dealt with through the ‘population’ issues

- **An institutional demand on ‘equality’**
  - Mainly oriented on employment issues (glass ceiling, pay gap)
    - It is difficult to integrate issues related to work and OSH

- **On the levers for action**
  - Usual levers (work and working time organisation, ergonomics, HRM, and so on) are enough
  - But it is necessary to use them in a specific way
    - And a specific attention to usually ‘invisible’ aspects
Our general hypothesis

- Improvements in the field of employment …
  - in terms of employment status, career path, income
- … Are closely linked to features of the work organisation
- Implicit norms in this field
  - Result in many forms of gender based selections
  - Are a major obstacle for sustainable work for men and women on the life course
  - Explains for a large part why the gender gap narrows so slowly
- These norms are all the stronger since they are also internalized by the workers (M/F) themselves
  - Weight of social norms for integration of individuals in groups and society
Our work hypothesis - Guidelines for action

- Gender based distribution of tasks
  - Gender stereotypes play a major role in HRM but also in tasks distribution within teams
  - Poor work design have a selective effect in some occupations

- Working times
  - The combination of market and industrial constraints result in a growing number of
    - ‘atypical’ working times (2 out of 3 employees)
    - precarious situations and underemployment
  - Unpaid work is usually out of the scope
    - It can be a major burden (or support) according to the situation
    - This has an important impact on the ability to hold the job
Our work hypothesis - Guidelines for action

- Underestimation and/or naturalization of risks and skills
  - Underestimation of risks resulting from combined exposures (especially if under threshold values)
  - Gender (human ?) blind conception of work
  - Growing demand on ‘behavioural’ skills
  - Gender and professional ‘norms’ tend to naturalize risks and skills

- Career path and life course
  - Promotion criteria include implicit norms (working time flexibility, ability to hold arduous jobs, employment interruptions …) that create glass ceilings at many levels
  - ‘Static career’ can generate health problems (physical or psychological)
Our work hypothesis - Guidelines for action

- Healthy and active ageing
  - The first (health) is a major determinant of the second (activity)
  - The pension reform will bear differently on workers according to their career path and life course
    - A major challenge for workers with interruptions
    - Some workers at major risk of exclusion and poverty
      - Interruptions often come along with precarious status and underemployment (non-chosen part-time work …)
      - Precarious workers tend to cumulate different forms of strains and constraints (≈ ‘dirty work’)
Part 2 – MSD prevention

Case – Study

Eric PELTIER
ARACT Basse-Normandie
Case study Nr. 1

The Company
- A printing company
- 225 employees
- 2 main workshops: Printing & Finishing

The Request
- upsurge of complaints from employees regarding pain
- A desire to understand the causes of illness occurrence
- Women's absenteeism has steadily been rising in recent months, focusing the attention of the company on this population.
Differential impacts of working conditions over Health, according to occupations

Jobs' Weight in absenteeism in relation to the respective weights in the workforce
Finishing - 2005>2009
Differential impacts of working conditions over Health, according to gender

Diseases Localization and Weight of gender regarding the FINISHING department Workforce - December 2009

- HANDS / WRISTS
- LOWER BACK
- SHOULDERS
- BACK
- KNEES
- NECK
- FEETS / ANKLES
- ELBOW
- LEGS

Men vs Women
The invisibility of women’s working conditions (1)

> Upper limbs are submitted to significant stresses

> Heavy weights carrying

Observations (12/01/2010):
4 000 books./h,
Estimated weight: 20kg

> 1 cartridge / 45’’
> = 80 cartridges / h
> = 1,6t tons carried / h
> = 11t/day/Finishing Assistant
(>>> 1 hubble telescope)
The invisibility of women’s working conditions (2)

> Access difficulties
The Gendered labor division (2)
Women's careers frozen

17 Finishing Assistants

- 15 Recruitments
- 19 Employees

- 1 Sewing Operator
- 1 Office Assistant

- 3 Dismissal for physical incapacity
- 1 Retirement
- 2 Resignations

- 1 "Printers"
- 5 Machinists
- 3 Machinist Assistants
Recommendations

⇒ For everyone
- Act Upstream
  - Work upstream with the notebooks’ suppliers (internal & external) in order to limit the upper limbs stress et heavy weights carrying

- Rethinking the design of workstations

⇒ For Women
- Building on recognition and career paths:
  - Recognize the skills held by Finishing Assistants and their responsibility in production line efficiency
  - Enable women to move upwards to the occupation of Machinist Assistant or Machinist (Training)
Part 3 - Chronic progressive pathologies
Case study
How to maintain people at work

From the disease of work to the disease at work
Extraprofessional pathologies

- Among the workers with extraprofessional pathologies: more and more workers with evolutionary chronic pathologies (cancer, HIV, hepatitis C, multiple sclerosis, diabetes…).

- Almost 20% of the working population is concerned, and this proportion should grow as the working-life time is extended, and as the workforce is ageing.

- These persons affected by chronic evolutionary pathologies do work, but the financial cost, the conditions and the impact of keeping them at work are most of the time underestimated or even unknown.

- Strong impact on work, particularly for women (4th European survey on working conditions).
The « discriminating organization » of work

- The pluri-pathology

- The "discriminating" organization of work
  - Effects on work of the pathology and its treatment

- The multidisciplinary approach :
  - Importance to combine the approach of patients’ associations and healthcare professionnals
  - Coordinate actions and create dynamics between the different interlocutors : institutions, employers, healthcare professionals,…
The working conditions of women: less visible and objectivized than those of men

- **For every woman** (but increased in case of a chronic disease):
  
  • A longer "life expectancy at work" (incomplete career) + Development of chronic pathologies after the age of 50: women specifically concerned by the perspective of being maintained at work
  
  • Employment conditions of women worsen their working conditions: job insecurity, involuntary part-time job, atypical schedules, night work …
  
  • Family and domestic responsibilities have to be assumed

- **And more specifically for women affected by a chronic pathology**:
  
  • Some tasks have to be performed outside the workplace, and sometimes require the help of relatives (working time to be adapted)
Impacts of evolutionary chronic pathologies and their treatment

Impact on the person:

- Tiredness
- Job loss + difficulties to find another one
- Difficulties in relation with the disease and its medical treatment (medication, concentration, irritability, tiredness…)
- Stigmatization
- Image given

Impact on the company:

- Absenteeism issues
- Organisation of work
- Sharing workload with other workers
- Variable state of health of the person
Evolutionary chronic pathologies: specific effects on women at work

Women affected by this type of diseases have to face a **triple discrimination**:

- Woman / man (gender issues)
- Sick person / able-bodied person
- Disease (no acknowledgement) / disability (acknowledgement)
Aims at avoiding the implementation of measures based on a wrong assessment of the activity that could create difficulties at every level (performance, health, …)

Another way to approach work:
the person affected by a chronic disease has to be considered as a common worker
A concrete example: a worker affected by multiple sclerosis

Isabelle M. works as a trainer in a Training institute

Degree of disability: 80%
- Progressive loss of sight: partially sighted person
- Sensory disorders of lower limbs: moves with difficulty
- Suffers from back injuries: problems with carrying heavy objects

Works as a trainer:
- Basic knowledge, job-hunting, socialisation, orientation

Works mornings – therapeutical part-time: Tiredness

Without help from her husband, Isabelle would not be able to work
Tasks that Isabelle needs to do to work

- Drive from her home to her workplace (25 km)
- Carry her business documents
- Get into the Training institute (16 steps to get to her floor)
- Door-to-door advertisement activities
- Prepare her course from home
- Organize the schedule for each trainee
- Move from a group of trainees to another
- …

Within the framework of the project, and using the approach based on her actual work, analysis of the working situations listed below:

- Driving from her home to her workplace
- Carrying business documents
- Getting into the Training institute
- Using IT tools
- Working from her home
Solutions found thanks to the « based on work » approach

• To drive from her home to her workplace :
  → Financial support (specific public founds allowance)
  → Her husband is now employed by a human-services company to drive her to work, park the car, help his wife to orientate herself, accompany her to the reception, prepare the courses, keep schedules, draft minutes

• To carry her business documents :
  → Purchase of a special carrier rolling bag

• To get into her office :
  → Moving to new business premises at street-level is under discussion with the present manager in Bordeaux
Solutions found thanks to the « based on work » approach

• To use the IT tools :
  → Purchase of specific equipment : a video enlarger, a special keyboard with large keypad, a protective equipment against high luminosity,…
  → Tools inside and outside the workplace have been synchronised

• To work from her home :
  → Acknowledgment and financial compensation of the hours spent on working from home
  → Consideration about the implementation of teleworking
  → Purchase of a specific seat adapted to Isabelle’s morphology (the same seat has been bought for her office)
People in charge of Isabelle

• **Medical environment**: company doctor, family doctor, specialists, functional physiotherapist, occupational therapist, social worker, nurse, …

• **Workplace**: employer, other employees, colleagues, H+S committee, unions, …

• **Institutions and social environment**: local authorities in charge of healthcare, patient associations, ARACT, her husband and relatives…

All these people have to work together and have to be parts of the project management
Conditions required for the approach to succeed

– Will and agreement of the worker affected by a chronic disease
– Will of the management within the company
– Implication of all the people involved in the action (company doctor, healthcare professionnals,…) to reach a common goal
– Considerations around organizational matters

For more information, see : www.maladie-chronique-travail.eu
Conclusion

- Case studies show
  - The weight of gender stereotypes and norms in division of tasks
  - The impact of unequal situation of men and women on the labour market on the actual working conditions (through HRM)
  - The impact of ‘non-paid work’ on the ability (or not) to perform well in a paid work

- Thus
  - The efficiency of action and/or policies depend on the account taking of the differing situations of workers at and outside work
    - Tailor made actions vs quantitative targets in social policies
  - The quality of work (and its sustainability) goes along with the quality of employment
    - Both are intertwined and mutually dependent
‘Equality policies usually target women as a whole - but gender mainstreaming should be able to target the diverse situations of the different groups of both women and men (migrant women, young women, old men…)

- Final report of Activities of the Group of Specialists on Mainstreaming, Council of Europe -