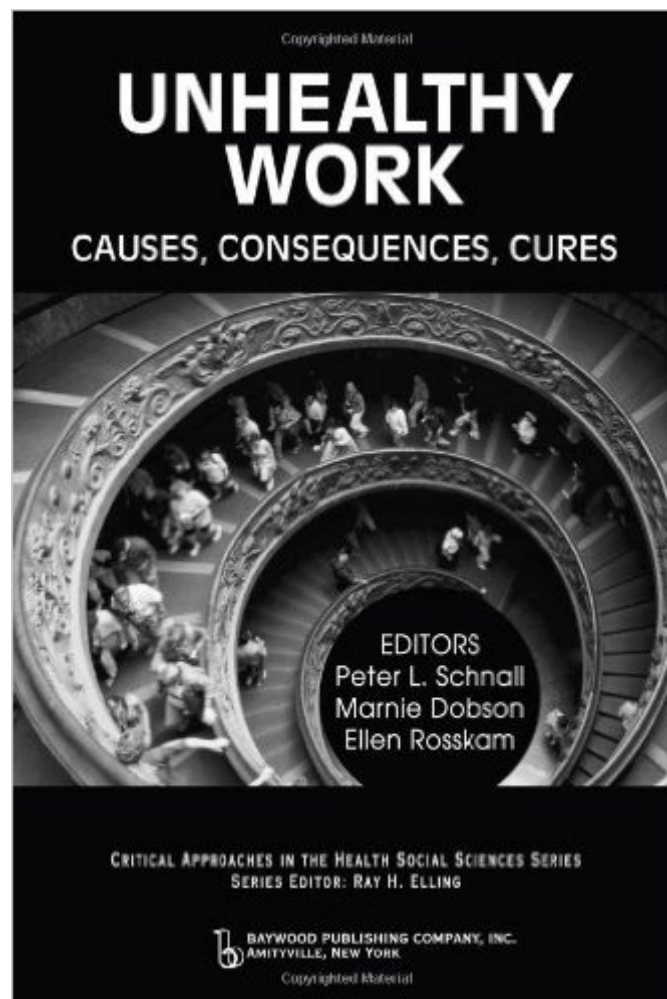


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Unhealthy Work: Causes, Consequences, Cures (Critical Approaches In The Health Social Sciences Series)



Synopsis

Work, so fundamental to well-being, has its darker and more costly side. Work can adversely affect our health, well beyond the usual counts of injuries that we think of as 'occupational health'. The ways in which work is organized - its pace and intensity, degree of control over the work process, sense of justice, and employment security, among other things - can be as toxic to the health of workers as the chemicals in the air. These work characteristics can be detrimental not only to mental well-being but to physical health. Scientists refer to these features of work as 'hazards' of the 'psychosocial' work environment. One key pathway from the work environment to illness is through the mechanism of stress; thus we speak of 'stressors' in the work environment, or 'work stress'. This is in contrast to the popular psychological understandings of 'stress', which locate many of the problems with the individual rather than the environment. In this book we advance a social environmental understanding of the workplace and health. The book addresses this topic in three parts: the important changes taking place in the world of work in the context of the global economy (Part I); scientific findings on the effects of particular forms of work organization and work stressors on employees' health, 'unhealthy work' as a major public health problem, and estimates of costs to employers and society (Part II); and, case studies and various approaches to improve working conditions, prevent disease, and improve health (Part III).

Book Information

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Drawing on international research from public health, social policy, epidemiology, geography and political science, this book systematically demonstrates that work and worklessness are central to our health and wellbeing and are the underlying determinants of health inequalities. The material and psychosocial conditions in which we work have immense consequences for our physical and mental wellbeing, as well as for the distribution of population health. Recessions, job-loss, insecurity and unemployment also have important ramifications for the health and wellbeing of individuals, families and communities. Chronic illness is itself a significant cause of worklessness and low pay. This book demonstrates that countries with a more regulated work environment and a more interventionist and supportive welfare system have better health and smaller work-related health inequalities. Specific examples of policies and interventions that can mitigate the ill-health effects of work and worklessness are examined and the book concludes by asserting the importance of politics and policy choices in the aetiology of health and health inequalities. "I strongly recommend this volume as a way of stimulating a change of direction in the literature on the determinants of health and health inequalities" from the Foreword by Professor Vicente Navarro, The Johns Hopkins University, USA. -Clare Bambra Professor of Public Health Policy, Wolfson Research Institute for Health and Wellbeing, Durham University, UK.

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