

Emerging aspects of psychosocial risks: violence and harassment at work

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SUMMARY

In the last twenty years, psychosocial risks have become crucial in Occupational Health. Particularly, there is an increasing interest about psychological and physical violence at the workplaces. Psychological violence (mobbing or workplace bullying) is described as a situation in which the person has been the victim of negative acts directed to the person and work, with offences, discriminations and isolation. Physical violence at work, still underestimated in many parts of the world, is becoming a topical subject both for its frequency and its pathogenic potential and consist of violence among workers (internal violence) and between workers and external persons (external violence). Examples of external violence are bank robberies, which are prevalent in many European countries, particularly in Italy. The costs of psychological and physical workplace violence are very high at all levels; individual, for the implication of violence for health and quality of life as well as organizational, for the increase of absenteeism, turnover and health care demands and claims. The Medical Centre for Occupational Stress and Harassment (CDL) of the "Clinica del Lavoro Luigi Devoto" was set up in 1996 with a day-hospital service for the diagnosis, rehabilitation and prevention of work related psychological diseases. From its opening, about 5000 patients have been examined.