

The occupational physician in the post-modern world

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The Author shows how historically the world of work has changed and how this change was paralleled by a modified occupational health.

Accordingly, also occupational physicians were forced to decide whether modify their professional behavior or else to stagnate.

These changes were:

- from slave to paid work;
- from work with animals to work with machines;
- from day work to shiftwork;
- from monotonous to repetitive work;
- from dynamic to static work;
- from healthy to unhealthy work;
- from individual to teamwork;
- from polluting to ecologically aware work;
- from anti-ergonomic to ergonomically adequate work;
- from work done to gain money to work done for personal fulfillment;
- from modern (XX Century) to post-modern work (XXI Century).

Post-modernity is a concept that synthesizes the complexity of our social, cultural and economic situation.

These three aspects interact and form a context in which, among other human realities, a company, an association and an occupational health physician may evolve.

Within this new paradigm, the occupational health physician must have her/his professional strategy, that is to define how it will be better for being different.

Being better means defining clear goals, paths and objectives, and identifying adequate tools and skills for translating them into actions.

Being different is the condition of being better.

Making things differently means having routines which take you to the unusual.

A better occupational physician, or a better occupational health organization is that physician or that organization able to develop an organizational structure, to create different processes and to well manage problems and change-related pain of people.

In the post-modernity, companies and organizations must go through a process of change and adaptation or otherwise they will be exiled from this world.

A post-modern occupational physician should be, first and foremost, a professional in the full meaning of the word: an ethical human being, thinking globally and acting locally; he should have a holistic approach, and professional maturity. He should be willing to grow and help others grow. He should know when it is necessary to say YES and when it is necessary to say NO.

Secondly, he should have technical capacity, and adequate training. He should be ready to work in prevention, know how to work in team, and know how to be a leader. He should belong to occupational health associations in all levels, that is, state / national / international associations.

He will give more importance to the people who form a company or an organization, not placing them in opposite sides.

The solution for the chronic occupational health problems will not come from the knowledge or ideology of the professionals, nor will the solution for the wearing off of the organizations will come from the technological advancement. These solutions will undoubtedly come through internal transformations occurring inside the persons, allowing qualities and virtues of the true professional to arise.

Ethics is a requirement of the post-modern world, and it may and must be extended to occupational health.

ICOH has an ethical code which is very well divulged among its associates.

The Author proposes a trans-disciplinarity orientation to occupational health, since knowledge flows through the different subjects and sciences and transcends the professionals.

Within this new paradigm, the occupational health physician will have a fundamental role, but at one only condition, a pre-requisite: she/he her/himself has to be post-modern.

A post-modern company will be in need of such a post-modern occupational health physician, as well as of her/his occupational health association.

The occupational health physician must never turn her/his back to the risks existing in her/his work.

Maybe the greatest challenge facing an occupational health physician is to change mentally and behaviorally, and also to change her/his way of thinking. The stereotyped narrow-mindedness of the male as well as the female brain must be removed.

Some advices for future occupational health physicians are the following:

- do not set unreal deadlines;
 - not all presentations will be successful;
 - the traditional hierarchic structure only gets on the way;
 - pay attention to the market signs;
 - what is good for one professional may not be good for another;
 - choose the most adequate tool for each situation;
 - not always we are able to implement technical solutions;
 - not always we get the results we plan;
 - the usage of technical solutions is inevitable.
- However, difficulties of the people must be considered;
- get used to working under pressure;
 - believe in yourself, have confidence;
 - go till the end, never give up. Fight.

Alternatively, for those who prefer to fail as occupational health physicians, we have the following advices:

- blame others;
- blame yourself;
- do not set objectives;
- do set the wrong objectives
- choose shortcuts;
- choose the longest way;
- don't worry about small details;
- give up soon;
- the weight of the past;
- the illusion of success.

