

## From the Guest Editor

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Stress affects every person alive regardless of age, gender or socioeconomic status. Sources of stress range from personal frustrations to high productivity demands in the workplace. The degree to which we can maintain a healthy and productive lifestyle reflects the degree to which we can identify and cope with our stressors. As healthcare professionals we know both intuitively and scientifically the profound effects that stress has on all systems. We know that stress impacts not only work productivity and job satisfaction but also immune system functioning and chronic disease. To that end, healthcare professionals need to recognize the far-reaching effects of stress on individuals and organizations and provide clients with means to reduce or manage these stressors.

This issue of *WORK* is devoted to issues relating to stress throughout the lifespan incorporating developmental, psychosocial and physiologic perspectives. Authors recognize that sources and outcomes of stress are multifactorial in nature and thus have sought to integrate the following themes into their papers:

- The causes and effects of stress need to be defined for each population.
- A range of stressors exist for all ages and populations.
- The effects of stress can be pervasive, affecting multiple body systems.
- The effects of stress can be measured using a variety of methods.
- Stress can be managed by implementing individual and organizational level strategies on an ongoing basis.

The articles are organized in a developmental sequence and a stress prevention to stress management progression. Bowler first provides readers with a review of the stress response and a historical summary of research in psychoneuroimmunology. This background enables readers to appreciate the systemic effects of stress and the basis of mind-body approaches. Stacey describes the stressors for adolescents with learning disabilities entering the workforce. This qualitative research underscores the importance of training and practice to reduce the difficulties of transition from school to work for these students. Glennon provides insight into stressors in college entry for students with

Asperger's syndrome. Glennon poignantly describes the difficulty with social interaction for these students and provides and suggestions for adaptation to the college environment.

The next group of papers focuses on the relationship between stress and physical conditions such as cardiovascular, hypertension and musculoskeletal disorders in working age populations. Landsbergis et al discuss the extensive research linking psychosocial work stressors to cardiovascular disease and the mechanisms that underlie these relationships. They examine current techniques to measure psychosocial and physiologic workplace stress including the most accurate means of measuring blood pressure.

Collins introduces readers to heart rate variability, a cutting-edge method of analyzing a person's autonomic nervous system response to stress. This method will help reveal the etiology of stress-related diseases and help quantify exposure to workplace stressors in the future. Warren broadly examines the overall contribution of psychosocial and biomechanical stressors to the development of musculoskeletal disorders in the workplace using the Ergonomic Program Standard as a case to discuss these issues. Stein focuses on stress management techniques that an individual can implement in order to minimize the effects of daily stressors. Stein discusses the powerful effects that relaxation, exercise and biofeedback have on calming the body when used on a regular basis.

Hansson et al direct us to reexamine the positive coping strategies of older workers and understand their risks for diseases due to both work-related stressors and the challenges of growing older. Meriano clarifies the legal issues and terms involved in claiming work-related stress as a compensable injury under current Worker's Compensation Systems. Finally, Sanders poses the question of responsibility for minimizing stress in the workplace: Are the workers or workplaces accountable?

While all authors acknowledge the continual rise of stress in today's society, the negative effects can be largely prevented through collaborative personal, organizational, and legislative efforts.

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Guest Editor