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## Workplace Safety for Aged Adults—A Neglected Priority in Occupational Health

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### LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Workplace safety is a cornerstone of occupational health, yet one demographic remains conspicuously underserved: aged adults. As global workforce demographics shift, with older adults increasingly remaining in or re-entering the workforce, the need to address their unique safety concerns has become urgent. Despite this, workplace safety policies and practices often fail to account for the physiological, cognitive, and ergonomic challenges faced by older workers. This oversight not only jeopardizes their health and well-being but also undermines organizational productivity and sustainability.

Aged adults bring invaluable experience and expertise to the workplace, but they also face heightened risks of injury and illness due to age-related declines in physical strength, balance, and sensory acuity. For instance, older workers are more susceptible to musculoskeletal disorders, slips, trips, and falls, as well as chronic health conditions that can be exacerbated by workplace stressors (Juba et al., 2024). Furthermore, cognitive changes associated with aging, such as slower reaction times and reduced memory recall, can increase the likelihood of accidents in high-risk environments (Juba et al., 2023). Despite these risks, many workplaces lack tailored safety interventions, such as ergonomic adjustments, flexible work schedules, and targeted training programs, to accommodate older workers.

The neglect of aged adults in occupational health is particularly concerning given the growing proportion of older individuals in the workforce. According to the International Labour Organization, the global labor force participation rate for individuals aged 55 and older has risen steadily over the past two decades, a trend expected to continue as life expectancy increases and retirement ages are pushed back (ILO, 2021). This demographic shift underscores the need for proactive measures to ensure the safety and well-being of older workers.

Recent research highlights the importance of adopting people-centric approaches to workplace safety, particularly for vulnerable populations. Olajide et al. (2023) emphasize the value of equitable workforce development models that prioritize inclusivity and adaptability, principles that are equally applicable to occupational health. Similarly, Juba et al. (2024) advocate for integrating mental health support into occupational safety programs, a strategy that could significantly benefit older workers who may face additional stressors related to aging and caregiving responsibilities.

To address these challenges, organizations must adopt a holistic approach to workplace safety that considers the unique needs of aged adults. This includes:

1. **Ergonomic Interventions:** Redesigning workspaces to reduce physical strain, such as adjustable workstations, anti-fatigue mats, and assistive devices, can help mitigate the risk of musculoskeletal injuries (Juba et al., 2024).
2. **Flexible Work Arrangements:** Offering part-time schedules, remote work options, and job-sharing opportunities can help older workers manage age-related health conditions while remaining productive (Olajide & Oluwafunmise, 2024).
3. **Targeted Training Programs:** Providing age-specific safety training, such as fall prevention workshops and cognitive health initiatives, can empower older workers to navigate workplace hazards effectively (Juba et al., 2023).
4. **Health and Wellness Initiatives:** Integrating mental health support, chronic disease management, and preventive care into occupational health programs can improve overall well-being and reduce absenteeism (Juba et al., 2024).



The benefits of such interventions extend beyond individual workers. By fostering a safe and inclusive work environment, organizations can enhance employee engagement, reduce healthcare costs, and improve productivity (Juba, 2024). Moreover, prioritizing the safety of aged adults aligns with broader sustainability goals, as it promotes social equity and intergenerational solidarity (Olajide et al., 2023).

In conclusion, workplace safety for aged adults is a critical yet neglected priority in occupational health. As the global workforce continues to age, it is imperative that policymakers, employers, and occupational health professionals take proactive steps to address the unique challenges faced by older workers. By doing so, we can create a more equitable, sustainable, and productive work environment for all.

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