

ERGONOMICS AND GENDER

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SUMMARY

A radical change in the workplace has resulted from the increased presence of women and mothers, a majority of whom are currently part of the labor force. Because men and women are differentially distributed in workplaces and show different effects from their work, some ergonomists are beginning to question the place of gender in ergonomic studies (1,2). Jobs, tasks, requirements, and even operating methods can differ according to gender (3). This session will cover different aspects in the consideration of work by gender. The first study, by Duguay et al., is a quantitative analysis of the compensated occupational injuries of Québec male and female professionals in 1995-97. It is the first analysis of its type and promises to indicate new avenues for prevention. Its content merits consideration within the context of documents on the division of labor by gender and the interventions that follow. The second study, by Gonik et al., deals with the relationship between work and family life. In a concept of occupational health based on the determination of compensation, the family environment is often not considered pertinent. This work-family dichotomy is rejected by the authors, who start with an investigation conducted in Switzerland in order to propose a new conceptualization of this relationship. The last two studies, by Gonzalez et al. and by Seifert, analyze work in the service sector, in highly feminized occupations. In both environments, child care and hotel room maintenance, women's work is dependent on the relationship with the clientele. Gonzalez et al. begin with the educational psychologists' work in order to reflect on the relationships between clients and workers in the service sector. Seifert uses a physical problem to initiate reflection on the consideration of the biological differences between men and women in workplaces.

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