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Adverse employment histories and health functioning: The CONSTANCES study

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ABSTRACT

BACKGROUND - With changing employment histories in European labour markets, occupational health research need to be supplemented by an approach that integrates adverse characteristics of entire employment histories, in terms of precarious, discontinued and disadvantaged employment careers. We analyse associations of adverse employment histories and six measures of health functioning, including affective, physical and cognitive functioning. **METHODS** - We use baseline data from the CONSTANCES study with detailed retrospective data on previous employment histories that is linked to current health functioning among people aged 45 to 60 (men= 15 134; women= 16 584). The following career characteristics are assessed (all referring to careers between 25 and 45): number of jobs with temporary contracts, number of job changes, number of unemployment periods, years out of work, mode occupational position, and lack of job promotion. The measures of health functioning range from depressive symptoms, standing balance, walking speed, lung function, to verbal memory and semantic fluency. **RESULTS** - For both men and women, multilevel regressions (participant nested in health examination centre) revealed that adverse employment histories are associated with poor health functioning later on, in particular persistent disadvantage in terms of low occupational position, repeated periods of unemployment and weak labour market ties (years out of work). Findings remain consistent after excluding respondents who had a health-related career interruption or already retired before age 45, and additionally, after adjusting for age, partnership and education. **CONCLUSION** - Findings call for increased intervention efforts among more disadvantaged groups of the labour market at early career stages.

KEYWORDS: Employment histories; Work stress; Life course; Health functioning

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