

Female

There is growing concern that employers should be doing more to take account of the debilitating hormonal challenges that can affect women workers. Unison, Britain's biggest trade union, which represents 1.3 million public sector workers, has just published an employer's guide to keep middle-aged women in the workforce and Channel Four has launched workplace friendly policies for menopausal women. Meanwhile other research (see link below) has found that up to 11m women have taken long term sick leave because of periods and menopause symptoms. Many of them are then lost to the workforce altogether, with associated damage to employers.

- [1] <https://workplaceinsight.net/the-menopause-and-other-female-health-issues-should-be-addressed-better/>
 [2] https://www.theguardian.com/society/2019/oct/18/channel-4-launches-menopause-policy-for-employees?CMP=Share_iOSApp_Other
 [3] <https://www.unison.org.uk/news/press-release/2019/10/menopause-workplace-guide-launched-unison/>



Stress

One of the key causes of worsening stress in the workforce is the fear that jobs will be lost to robots. A study by Canada Life Group Insurance found half of all workers are worried automation will force them out of a job and doggedly come to work when they're sick because of it. Canada Life has warned that to reap the benefits of automation companies must ensure the health and wellbeing of their non-robotic workforce.

As of this year, burnout is being recognised by the World Health Organisation as a "syndrome" that results from poorly managed chronic workplace stress. It will appear in the next edition of the World Health Organisation's International Disease Classification (ICD-11), the official compendium of diseases. In some cases, the condition can cause emotional and physical paralysis, though journalists who declared burnout is now a disease were ticked off by WHO. The WHO said syndromes are not diseases and also failed to explain how doctors are meant to distinguish newly fashionable burnout from unfashionable depression.

- [1] <https://www.healthinsurancendprotection.com/protection/workplace-automation-impacting-employees%e2%80%99-mental-health>
 [2] https://www.who.int/mental_health/evidence/burn-out/en/



Paterson Inquiry

The recent report from the independent inquiry into the practices of disgraced Midlands breast surgeon Ian Paterson carries salutary lessons for all elements of the private healthcare sector.

Paterson wounded more than 750 women after giving them fabricated diagnoses and is currently serving a 20 year jail term. He was allowed to continue in practice for eight years after the alarm was first raised, thanks to what the 232-page report calls 'a culture of avoidance and denial.'

It criticises the Spire private hospital group for evading responsibility for allowing Paterson's practice, and for trying to avoid compensating his patients.

It also criticises the Medical Defence Union for refusing to pay out to Paterson's patients on the grounds it doesn't cover criminal action, and for refusing to appear before the inquiry to answer questions.

The report makes 15 recommendations for healthcare reform, including proper regulation of medical indemnity, a requirement for patients to be given full written information on the condition they are believed to be suffering from and an explanation of the differences between NHS and private healthcare.

- [1] https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/863211/issues-raised-by-paterson-independent-inquiry-report-web-accessible.pdf

Smoking and Vaping

After 37 deaths and 1,900 lung injuries were reported among America's mainly teenage vapers, evidence has emerged that fine particles of metal and nicotine from the steam produced by e-cigarettes can enter the circulation and damage the heart too. Millions of people have become vapers but nothing is known of the long term risks including possible damage caused by chemicals used in hundreds of weird flavourings such as cheesecake, garlic or roast chicken.

- [1] <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/health/vaping-heart-disease-research-smoking-a9187641.html>
 [2] <https://academic.oup.com/circovasces/article/116/1/40/5613736>

Ageing

Cynical employers may welcome the advent of two new pieces of data to predict the future value of ageing senior workers.

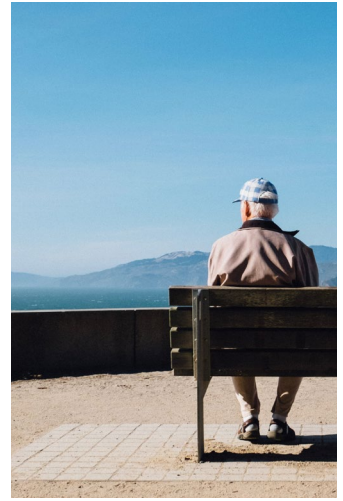
A study by University College London found people with a net household worth of £480,000 at the age of 50 would have nine more healthy productive years of life than those with just £28,000 of assets.

At the same time the Office for National Statistics has decided that, with today's 70 year-olds often as fit and productive as yesterday's 65s, it is more useful to have life expectancy counted back from death. They have introduced the concept of Remaining Life Expectancy (RLE) as a more accurate way of monitoring the ageing of the population and accounting for the impact of long-term illness.

The label of RLE15 – 15 years from death will be applied to all men aged 70 and all women aged 72. However as ever healthier cohorts of people in higher social classes move into old age, we could see wealthy 80 year olds classed as RLE15s.

[1] <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/health-fitness/body/finances-say-health-longevity/>

[2] <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/ageing/articles/livinglongerisage70thenewage65/2019-11-19#is-age-70-the-new-age-65>



Loos

Poor productivity has always been a problem in the British workforce, but it is not considered seemly for managers to stride into a deserted washbasin area and yell into the void to get everyone back to their desk. The advent of the sloping loo may therefore be a Godsend.

A British team has designed a 'standard toilet' which slopes forward at a 13 degree angle. Users have to brace their legs to avoid sliding off which begins to hurt after a few minutes, thus discouraging anyone inclined to hang about checking social media.

Lost productivity in the loo has been calculated to cost UK business £4 billion a year.

[1] <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/invention-helps-bosses-flush-out-lavatory-lingerers-ds2z20nw8?shareToken=a44e2f53b8e16c164a19825493b13067>

Overweight tongues

If the notion of quick stop lavatories wasn't distressing enough for the sedentary office worker, many will now be channeled into tongue weight loss programmes following the news from American researchers that fat tongues obstruct breathing and are to blame for cacophonous snoring. Fat apparently builds up on the tongue just as it does elsewhere in the body and losing weight also can transform sleep quality both for the previously fat person and anyone else trying to sleep in their vicinity, thus boosting overall health and work productivity.

[1] <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-51050566>

Note: The opinions expressed in this bulletin are those of the author(s). They do not purport to reflect the opinions or views of the WPA Group or its members. If you would like to discuss any of the topics covered then please don't hesitate to contact us.

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