

Minor mental disorder in health care workers: the associations with psychosocial work conditions

^{a,b}Wan-Ju Cheng M.D., Ph.D., ^cYawen Cheng Sc.D.

^a Department of Psychiatry, China Medical University Hospital, Taichung, Taiwan

^b Department of Public Health, China Medical University, Taichung, Taiwan

^cInstitute of Health Policy and Management, Department of Public Health, National Taiwan University, Taipei, Taiwan

Background

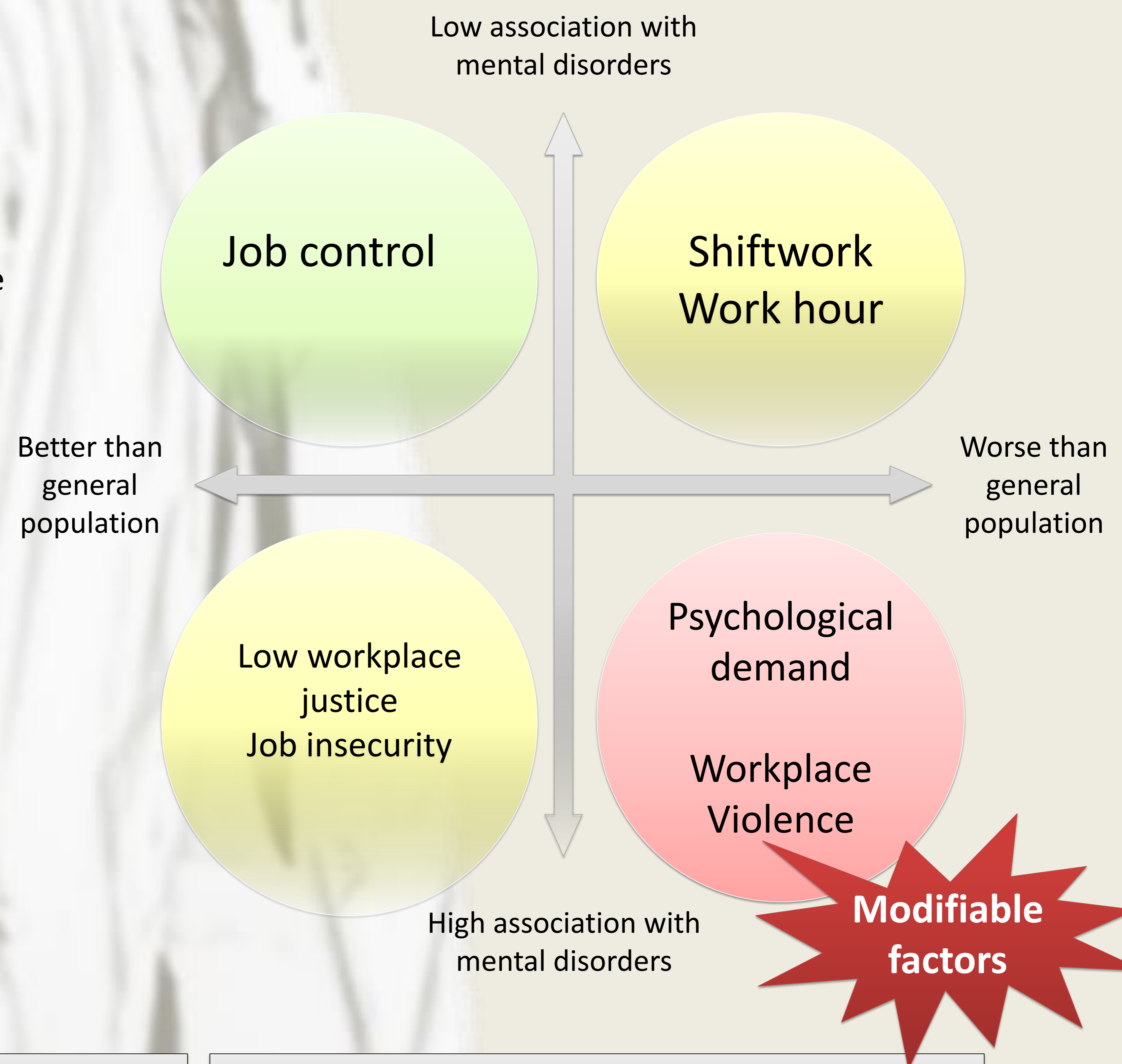
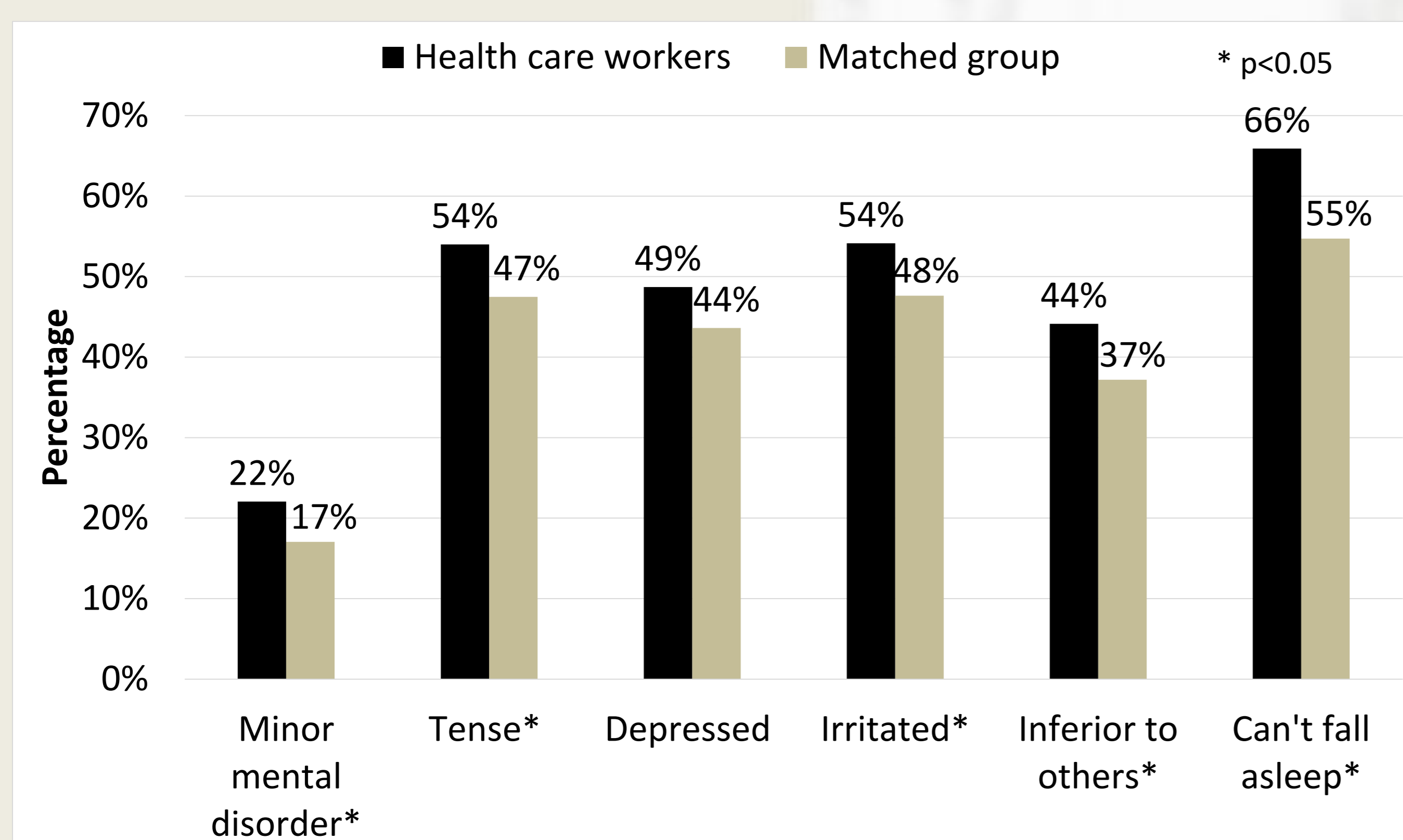
Health care workers face multiple psychosocial work hazards intrinsic to their work, including heavy workloads, workplace violence and shift work. However, to what extent their mental health status differ from general working population and how adverse psychosocial work conditions may contribute to increased mental health risks have rarely studied. This study aimed to compare the prevalence of minor mental disorder in health care workers with that in socio-demographically matched employees, and to examine the associations of selected psychosocial work conditions with mental health status.

Methods

A total of 349 health care workers were identified from 19,641 employees who participated in a national survey of general employees of Taiwan.. For each health care worker, 4 general employees were chosen, matched on age, gender and educational level. Minor mental disorder was assessed using the 5-item brief symptom rating scale (BSRS-5). Psychosocial work conditions were also assessed, including working hours, psychological job demands, job control, workplace justice, workplace violence and shift work status..

Results

As compared to general workers, health care workers were found to have a significantly higher prevalence of minor mental disorder, as defined by a cutoff point of more than 5 with the BSRS-5. Furthermore, health care workers were more likely than general workers to have longer working hours, heavier psychological job demands, higher job control, more workplace violence and higher prevalence of shift work. Among health care workers, experiences of workplace violence, lower workplace justice, heavier psychological job demands and job insecurity were significantly associated with a higher risk for minor mental disorder.



Discussion

Findings of this study indicate that health care workers are at higher risk for minor mental disorders, and they faced worse working conditions in many aspects. This is the first study to include psychosocial work characteristics newly identified in contemporary employment conditions. Work characteristics on an organizational level such as poor management and low workplace justice could have deteriorating effects on psychosocial work conditions. We suggest that modifiable psychosocial work conditions should be targeted to safeguard the mental health wellbeing of health care workers.

References

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