The health effects of later-life employment

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Overview

• Study of individuals aged 60+ (ELSA and Whitehall II Cohort Study)
• How does later-life employment affect health outcomes?
• Which additional factors influence wellbeing beyond retirement age, and how do these relate to employment?
• Important to understand implications of employment beyond statutory retirement age.
• Systematic review of literature found a broad range of effects of later-life employment on health.

**Effect of later-life employment on wellbeing**

- Positive effect: 14
- Negative effect: 17
- No effect: 9
What affects the health outcomes?

- Type of **workplace** and **work**
- Number of **hours** worked
- Factors of **wealth** and **social status**
- Effects of employment on **family commitments**
- Gender and **biological** effects
- Reasons for **continuing employment** and **retirement**
Health effects of later-life employment: meta-analysis

- Later-life employment is associated with lower levels of depression and suboptimal health.
- Results are highly heterogeneous.
- Subgroup analysis demonstrates differences in effects exist dependent on gender, age and country.
Forest plot: meta-analysis of the effect of later-life employment on depressive symptomatology

Pooled effect = -0.171

$I^2 = 98.5\%$
Forest plot: meta-analysis of later-life employment on suboptimal self-rated health

Pooled effect = -0.240

$I^2 = 98.7\%$
Using ELSA and Whitehall II

• Comparing employed population aged 60+ to those who are retired.

• Several aspects of mental and physical wellbeing:
  – Depression (CES-D)
  – Self-rated health
  – Quality of life (CASP-19)
  – Cognitive functioning
  – Mobility, ADL and IADL
  – Social isolation and loneliness
Employment and Wellbeing

ELSA: Measures of wellbeing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Employed</th>
<th>Retired</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Depression</td>
<td>8.6</td>
<td>17.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sub-optimal self-rated health</td>
<td>13.1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ADL difficulties</td>
<td>9.9</td>
<td>27.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Below average quality of life</td>
<td>47.6</td>
<td>30.1</td>
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</tbody>
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Source: ELSA 2008
• **Preliminary results**: suggest a link between better wellbeing and employment in later-life, although findings are highly varied.
  — ‘self-selection’ effects are also likely.

• **Next step**: establish a causal relationship between later-life employment and wellbeing.

• **Methodology**: propensity score matching and longitudinal analysis.