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Telework and Work-Related Well-Being

To the Editor:

In this "Corona Era," workers are recommended for telework in their home. The physical activity might reduce according to the lack of everyday commute between office and home, and obesity-related adverse effect on health should be paid attention. In addition, adverse mental health is also suspected by job- and family-related factors.

Vander et al¹ investigated the relationship between telecommuting and work-related well-being, including burnout, work engagement, and cognitive stress complaints. Social support from colleagues, participation in decision-making, task autonomy, and work-to-family conflict, but not extent of telecommuting, were significantly related to work-related well-being, and they concluded that preparing good work environments was important regardless of telecommuting. I have some concerns about their study.

First, Bentley et al² examined the association between organizational social and specific support for teleworkers, their well-being, and social isolation. Organizational social support for teleworkers was closely associated with increased job satisfaction and reduced psychological strain. In addition, social isolation mediated the relationship

between support and wellbeing, especially in partial teleworkers. These results are consistent with data by Vander et al,¹ and job characteristics might be fundamental predictors of work-related well-being.

Second, Henke et al³ conducted a prospective study to investigate the influence of the intensity of telecommuting on employee health. There was no association between telecommuting and stress or nutrition, and non-telecommuters were at greater risk for obesity, alcohol abuse, physical inactivity, and tobacco use. In addition, employees who telecommuted less than or equal to 8 hours per month were significantly less likely than non-telecommuters to experience depression. They concluded that employees had benefits from telecommuting opportunities. There is a possibility that period and content of telecommuting job might contribute to the health effect, and job characteristics should also be considered for the analysis.

Regarding to the second query, Crawford et al⁴ reviewed the health effects by remote and mobile working. Although psychosocial factors such as high demands were found among remote and mobile workers, adverse effects could not be recognized. As information on the general health and work-supporting variables is not enough for stable risk estimation, and health risk (benefit) of telework might be differed between the countries and also within one country. Factors of keeping work-related well-being should be verified by further studies.

Finally, the stress level might be closely related to job insecurity and recent

social environments would impact upon the levels of job satisfaction.⁵ In addition, there are socio-organizational determinants of stress, which have an influence on unethical behaviors. I suppose that recent working conditions might become worse, partly related to telework conditions. By considering comprehensive health-hazardous factors, multi-dimensional supports are needed for preventing their mental and physical illness and disorder.

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The author has no conflict of interest.

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