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Keynote Speech – Abstract

Work, Health and Retirement

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Governments across the industrialised world are for economic reasons trying to push up the de facto retirement age. Improved health among older persons is a prerequisite for this change, but the knowledge about the possible health consequences of postponed retirement age is limited. In a series of papers based on French, Finnish, British, Swedish and US data we have analysed the possible health effects of retirement, which indicate that retirement tends to be a relief for those who suffered from suboptimal self-rated health, sleep disturbances, fatigue, depression or headaches, whereas there seems to be no immediate effect on the risk of incident chronic disease. There are also indications that physical activity might increase following voluntary retirement. In ongoing project, we are furthermore analysing how work and behaviour related factors influences healthy life expectancy. Working conditions seem to have a fairly substantial impact on how long people can expect to remain in good health, also independently of socioeconomic position. The keynote will briefly summarise these studies and the state of the evidence regarding the health effects of work and retirement. A particular challenge is that increased financial incentives to work longer are likely to benefit those with the best health, best jobs and often also highest incomes, whereas those with the worst health, worst jobs and lowest income are at risk of suffering further setbacks in terms of both personal finances and health. The keynote will discuss these problems in light of the emerging scientific evidence.