

Publication

Work-related stress in midlife is associated with higher number of mobility limitation in older age-results from the FLAME study

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The aim of this study is to investigate whether work-related stress symptoms in midlife are associated with a number of mobility limitations during three decades from midlife to late life. Data for the study come from the Finnish Longitudinal Study of Municipal Employees (FLAME). The study includes a total of 5429 public sector employees aged 44-58 years at baseline who had information available on work-related stress symptoms in 1981 and 1985 and mobility limitation score during the subsequent 28-year follow-up. Four midlife work-related stress profiles were identified: negative reactions to work and depressiveness, perceived decrease in cognition, sleep disturbances, and somatic symptoms. People with a high number of stress symptoms in 1981 and 1985 were categorized as having constant stress. The number of self-reported mobility limitations was computed based on an eight-item list of mobility tasks presented to the participants in 1992, 1997, and 2009. Data were analyzed using joint Poisson regression models. The study showed that depending on the stress profile, persons suffering from constant stress in midlife had a higher risk of 30-70% for having one more mobility limitation during the following 28 years compared to persons without stress after adjusting for mortality, several lifestyle factors, and chronic conditions. A less pronounced risk increase (20-40%) was observed for persons with occasional symptoms. The study suggests that effective interventions aiming to reduce work-related stress should focus on both primary and secondary prevention.

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