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PARITY IN APPROACH TO MENTAL HEALTH AND PHYSICAL HEALTH IN THE WORKPLACE – IS ALL EQUAL IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF HEALTHY WORKPLACES?

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Canadian workers' compensation tribunal has set substantive legal precedents for parity in approach to psychological and physical injury placing a duty on employers to ensure psychological and physical safety in the workplace. Consequently, the National Standard for Psychological Health and Safety in the Workplace (2013) advocates for healthy workplaces through prevention, protection and promotion strategies. While not a new concept, development towards a healthy workplace spotlights again the expanding domain of occupational health to protect workers against injury from physical and psychological hazards. Hence, my research focuses on ways in which organizational culture, social climate and leadership style may influence the development of healthy workplaces. My findings clearly show a relationship between the various variables explored, leading to my revised model for the healthy workplace that clearly points to the separation of the distal environment (culture and leadership) from the proximal environment (climate, occupational bond, health practice) and indicates that the proximal environment variables have a greater influence over workers' perceptions than the distal working environment. This structural revision has important implications for both theory and practice. There

is some concrete evidence here suggesting that a top down approach is not necessarily the best way to implement change and support a healthy workplace. The findings are consistent with current research indicating that co-workers are more directly affecting behavior than supervisors or managers. In order to advance the healthy workplace management needs to pay particular attention to proximal influences. Author looks forward to discuss further the practical implications of this research.

Biography

Gabrielle McHugh completed her BA in Psychology from National University of Ireland in 1988; MA in Disability Management from University of Northern British Columbia in 2005 and PhD at the same university in 2012. Her PhD research focused on the ways in which organizational culture, social climate and leadership style influence the healthy workplace. She completed a four-year research fellowship at Bournemouth University, UK, before returning to Canada as an independent Social Scientist whose research in the area of healthy workplaces is endorsed by Excellence Canada. She is also affiliated with Webster University.

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