Your Night Shift Job is Killing You

Robert H. (Bob) Woods, Ph.D.
University of Nevada-Las Vegas
World Health Organization (WHO)

- December 2007 the WHO declares the night shift a “known carcinogen”

- In 2004 had noted that there appeared to be a relationship and set out to determine.
Data

I have no new data. Instead, must use the WHO data, which does not specifically segment hospitality.

WHY: because 200+ organizations have turned down my request to study their employees (and one union)
Other researchers, including the WHO, have used the same form that new patients fill out when visiting a doctor for the first time + demographic data, including work shift.
Research From

- Medical field in general
- Psychology
- Psychiatry
- Science journals
- Local newspapers
Health Effects

- Breast cancer--from 22-60% greater risk
- Sleep disorder diseases-70 mm Americans sleep deprived, 67% of those who work night shifts
- lose 1-2 hours sleep daily
- Marital relations--32% higher divorce rate 27% higher infidelity rates
- Child abuse-12%
- Child neglect--21%
- Children’s grades in school--18% lower
- Drinking--52% drink more than healthy
- 37% higher risk in injury to others
- 57% overweight, 31% obese (US 46% and 21%)
- Binge eating, especially bulimia--19%
- Engage in unsafe sex--31% (US 14%)
Health Effects (cont)

- Higher fatty acids = heart risk
- High blood pressure -- 21% more likely if work night shift
- Ulcers -- 40% higher
- Heart -- 40-50% higher risk of heart attack (all sources)
- Female heart -- 51% higher risk of heart attack
- Miscarriage (15%), child weight related problems (24%), pre-term birth 25%
- On the job injury -- 30%
- Smoking -- 45% of night shift workers smoke (22% overall US)
- Colon Cancer -- 18% higher risk
- Intestinal cancer -- 35%
Health (cont)

- Women--41% colon cancer risk, 52% rectal cancer
- Increased aging
- Alcohol--43% higher abuse rate
- Drugs--51% higher abuse rate
- Cardio-vascular disease overall--40%
- Type II diabetes--30% (intolerance to insulin)
Impact

- $18 billion US economy
- 70% of all shift workers’ health affected overall
- Fewer nuclear families
- Psychological disorders--some that lead to extreme actions
Why Night Shift Problems?

- Melatonin shortage/increased estrogen
- Pre-disposed people may work at night for various reasons
- May be 2nd job, or 2nd job for family (working in shifts to care for kids)
- Bad diets
- Bad habits
- Riskier behaviors (Ekrich, “moved over to dark side”)
- Lack of exercise
- Smoking
- Sunlight (melatonin)
Many solutions for mitigating the effects of working at night already exist. Some companies use them already.

Natural light lighting, diet, exercise, shift differential, family counseling, child care/family care, paying smokers to quit, advice on sleeping, child care for day-sleepers, etc...