

PARIS  
2 ▶ 7  
OCTOBER  
2016 ▶ Pullman Bercy Hotel



INTERNATIONAL  
**RAILWAY SAFETY COUNCIL**

Dr. Natalie Skeepers  
Non Exécutive Director  
Rail Safety Regulator South Africa



# Aging workers: Challenges for railway operators



# Discussion

- For the purpose of the discussion an older worker will be anyone from the age of 60 years
- Research shows that older workers are retiring much later between 65 and 75 years and beyond due to skills shortages, the need for social interaction ,retirement is not as appealing , finally for financial reasons
- Design and strategy to recruit, retain and re- engage employees need to be adapted in terms of the current recruitment practices and standards to address retention of older workers, re-employment and working conditions
- Employers need to introduce greater workplace flexibility in terms of policies and work procedures
- Adaptation of safety management systems
- Occupational Health programmes
- Medical surveillance programmes

# Skills Shortage



# Definition of Health

## Definition of 'health'

The **World Health Organization (WHO)** defined **health** in its broader sense in its 1948 constitution as "a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity."

**Source: World Health Organisation: 1948**



# Inclusive Workplace



Source: Movie The Intern: 2015

# Railway Working Conditions

The Railway environment /workplace are common to :

- Hard physical labour, static work, climatic influences, noise, and dust that typically characterize railway activities
- Railway employees , especially those employed in operations complain more about the awkward and static postures, vibration and climate , the physical environment, the actual organisation itself
- The way the organization is managed overall, interrelationships between workers, their own environment and the organisation, as well as personal and social relationships and personal anxieties.
- Furthermore, heart disease, depression and anxiety, low self-esteem and burnout are a number of the negative outcomes of such stress and stressors.
- Don't forget shift work which often lead to fatigue

# Ageism: The impact on health and wellness

Ageism is defined as prejudice or discrimination on the grounds of a person's age "ageism in recruitment is an increasing problem"

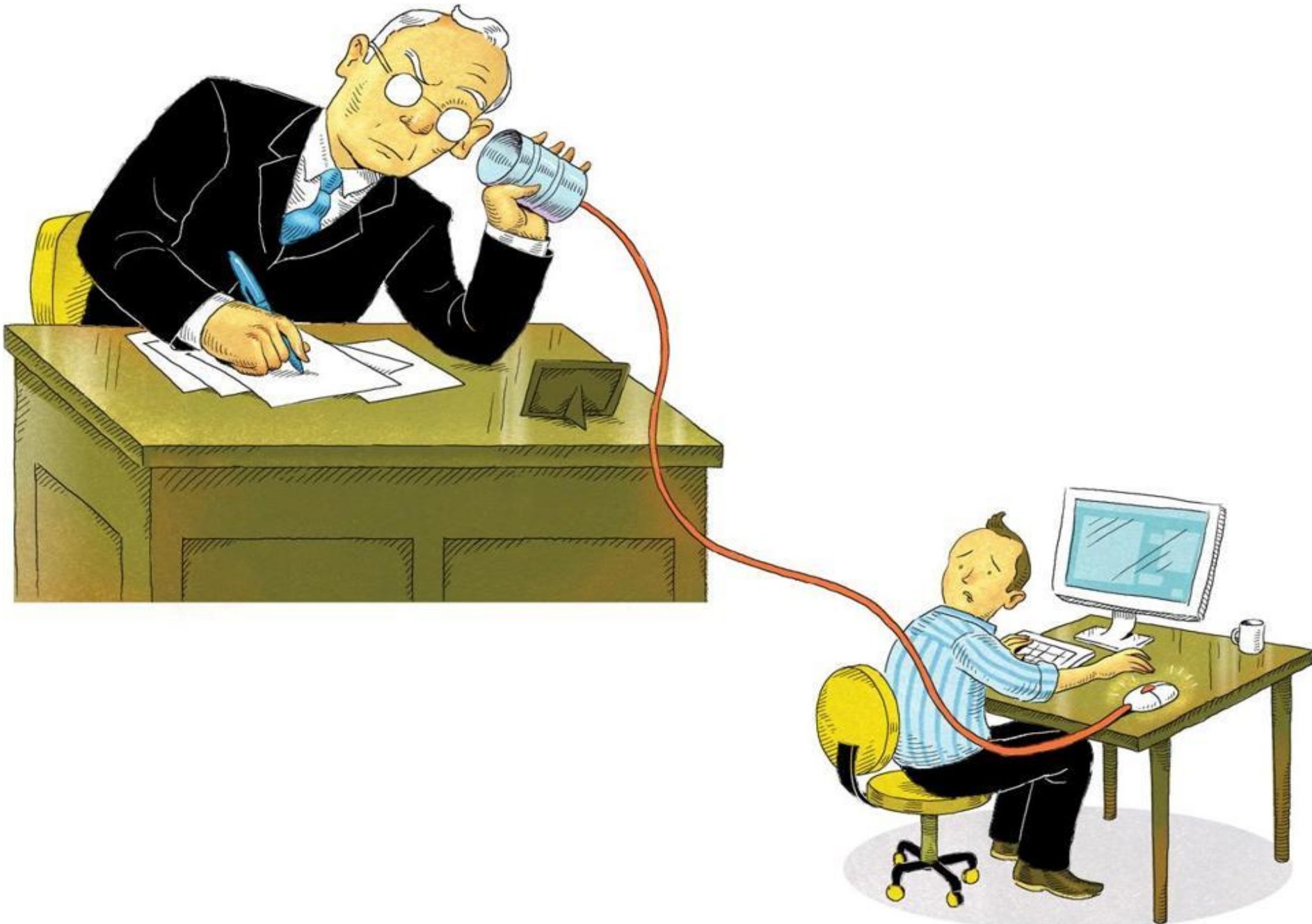
- The possible ill effects on older railway workers of the harsh environmental work conditions of noise, dust, vibration, hazardous substances etc.
- It is also likely that older workers are more susceptible to disease and their debilitating effects.
- Add on risks to be evaluated, e.g. where an employee is on chronic medication



# Physical Conditions

- The physical performance of older workers is often perceived by their employers to be reduced in a work environment that is commonly harsh and has heavy physical demands.
- Physiologically, in general, older workers exhibit lowered physical stamina and strength, and increased fatigue and time to recover from fatigue.
- These compromise their physical abilities, safety performance, and productivity at the immediate work site.

# Communication



# Common risks for older people

- Musculoskeletal disorders
- Fatigue
- Carpal Tunnel Syndrome
- Lower Back aches
- Awkward working positions
- Standing for long periods
- Repetitive work
- Working on heights
- Smoking and medication
- Physical Fitness
- Boring, mundane work
- Lifting work
- Sitting for long periods
- Visual Displays

# Safety Management Systems

- Procedures may require two or more workers to do the same job, to accommodate aged employees.
- Creating an inclusive workplace, e.g. consider the impact of sophisticated technology, Other considerations include:
  - Risk Assessments more frequently
  - Job demand analysis
  - Start time and finish time
  - Shorter meetings
  - Consider appointments and medical check up
  - Family structure and responsibilities
  - Longer lunch/comfort breaks
  - Increased supervision
  - Safety procedures reviewed regularly, e.g. emergency evacuation
  - Training

# Health and Wellness



# Medical Surveillance Programmes

- Medical surveillance must be adapted/adjusted
- Onsite medical facilities
- Stairs vs escalators
- First Aid at various workstations and or locations
- Driver assisted programmes
- Assistance with reach, stretch , stooping , bending etc.
- Wellness related exercise
- Longer lunch/comfort breaks
- Increased supervision on the job



# Technology



# Tools and Equipment

- Provide employee with simple tools and equipment –considering their age and medical conditions such as hearing, arthritis, eye sight
- Consult employees before assigning gadgets for communication purposes
- Driver assisted programmes
- Assistance with reach, stretch , stooping , bending etc.
- Wellness related exercise
- Longer lunch/comfort breaks
- Increased supervision e.g. CCTV /work station alert buzzers
- Safety procedures
- Medication alert or administration by onsite medical staff

# Fitness programmes





# Inclusive Adapted Workplace

- Stairs vs. escalators
- First aid facilities and keeping breathing apparatus ,oxygen tanks at work
- Additional equipment to assist with reach, stretch , stooping , bending jobs e.g.
- Wellness related exercise e.g. encouraging walking
- Lunch and comfort breaks when needed e.g. for taking medication
- Increased supervision /Buddy system
- Canteens at work

# Buddy System programmes



# Work Schedules





# Facilities

Facilities may need to be adapted to accommodate older employees:      Some suggestions include:

- Nap rooms /Nap Pods
- Handle bars
- Slip free/resistant mats
- Better lighting at workstations
- Ergonomically sound chairs
- Materials handling equipment instead of self help  
e.g. carrying of boxes etc.

# Facilities for older workers

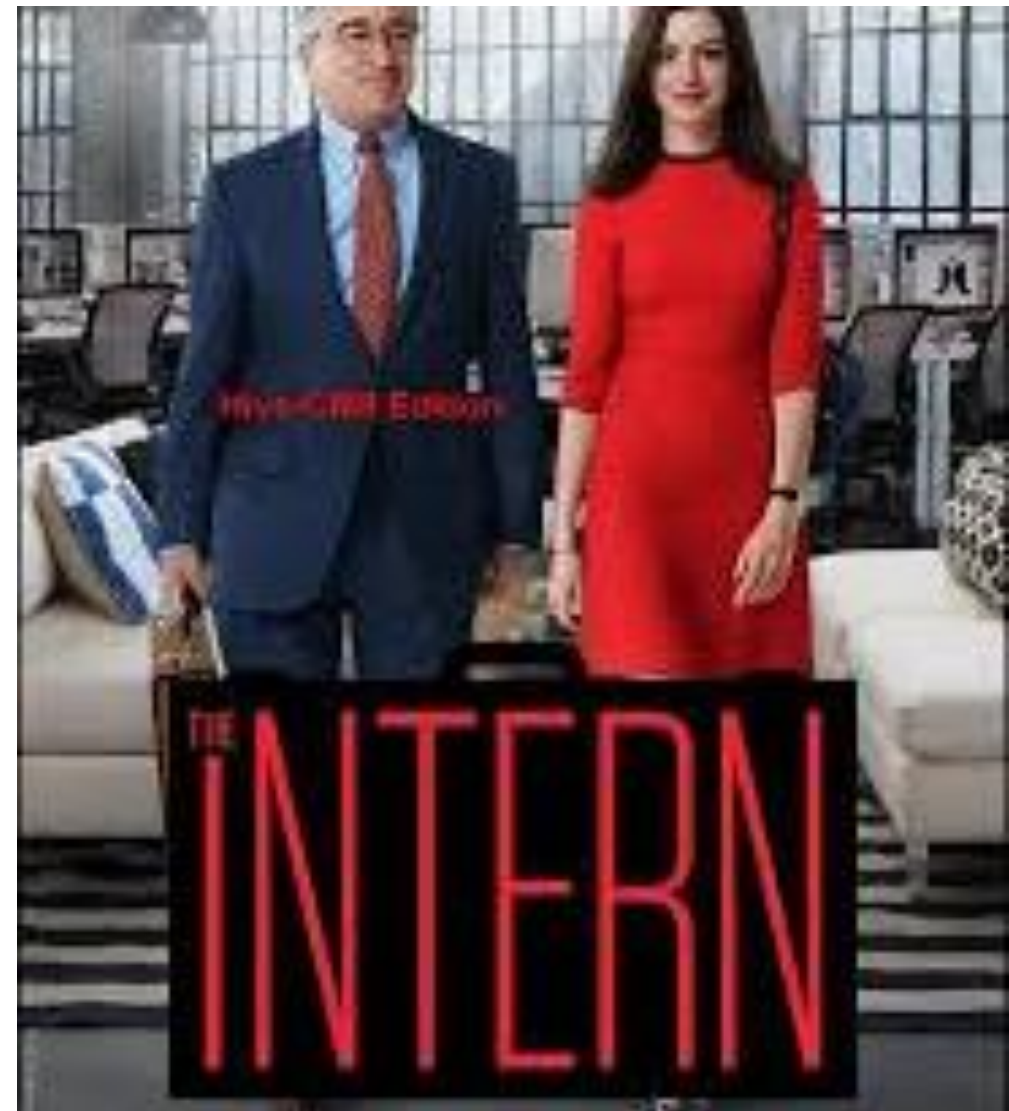


Source: Japanese Facilities

# Story Line Scenario 1

Ben Whittaker is 70, retired and discovers that tai chi classes, learning a new language and visiting his grandkids isn't all it's cracked up to be, so he turns to a new challenge - being **"The Intern"** at a New York fashion start-up.

# The Intern





# Story Line Scenario 2

A tourist from America was recently heard asking, “Why are there old people working in McDonald's (in Singapore)? I thought only young people work in Mac...”

Singapore is one of the only few countries where you see the elderly working in McDonald's, or just about every other fast food restaurant. You can also spot them at food courts cleaning your table, at public toilets cleaning up after you, and as security guards to lookout for your safety.

# Story Line 2

About a year ago, former Minister Mentor Lee Kuan Yew called on Singaporeans to work for as long as they can. He said, “You work as long as you can work and you will be healthier and happier for it. If you ask me to stop working all of a sudden, I think I’ll just shrivel up, face the wall and just that.”

In response to his comments, many were outraged and felt that the former MM was exhorting Singaporeans to work for as long as they can to avoid becoming a burden to the country.

Bluntly put, many felt they were asked to “work until the day they die”.

A recent report from the Ministry of Manpower has also found that 77% of companies here continue to employ those above 62 years old.



# Conclusion

- Employers need to rethink their recruitment strategies for older workers and consider the risks associated to the workplace
- In this regard employers can play a pivotal role in educating them in healthy living and providing appropriate counseling as required
- Positive improvements are possible if employer driven health and wellness promotion includes lowering personal and work related risk factors and improvements in the workplace to accommodate workers

# Conclusion

In addition include:

- Extra health benefits for both the employee and spouse/partner
- Support programmes
- Flexible office hours , lunch breaks
- Access to other company perks such as drivers and delivery services
- Additional medical surveillance programmes
- Increased communication and inclusive programmes