
Editorial

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Biographical notes: Pedro M. Arezes holds a PhD in Production and Systems Engineering from the University of Minho (Portugal) and he is an Associate Professor (with Habilitation) at the same university, where he coordinates the Human Engineering Research Group. In 2005, he was appointed as Director of the Ergonomics Laboratory at the University of Minho and he is also the Chairman of the Board of the Human Engineering MSc course and member of the board of the Doctoral Programme in Industrial Engineering and Systems. He has authored more than 150 papers in peer reviewed papers published in international journals and congress proceedings.

Paul Swuste is an Associate Professor of the Safety Science Group, Delft University of Technology, The Netherlands. He has an MSc in Biochemistry from the University in Leyden and finished his PhD thesis 'Occupational hazards and solutions' in 1996. From 1980 onwards, he is engaged in research in the domains of occupational safety, and hygiene in various branches of industry. Regularly he publishes in international scientific journals, and is a member of scientific committees of various international scientific conferences. From 1994 till 2008, he has organised the post graduate master course 'Management of Safety Health and Environment', together with Andrew Hale.

Mohammad Shahriari is a Professor (Chair) and the Director of Competence Center for HSE and Ethics, at the Faculty of Engineering, Department of Industrial Engineering at the University of Necmettin Erbakan, in Konya, Turkey. He has cooperation with Chalmers University of Technology, where he was involved for more than 15 years in risk assessment and environmental issues. He is the main author of four books, and more than 50 research papers in the fields of risk assessment, human factors and environmental risk assessment. He is a reviewer and member of the editorial committee of six international peer-reviewed scientific journals.

1 Introduction

Annually, the Portuguese Society for Occupational Safety and Hygiene (SPOSHO) organises the International Symposium on Occupational Safety and Hygiene, also known as SHO. Three Portuguese universities, University of Minho, University of Porto, Technical University of Lisbon, a Spanish university, the Polytechnic University of Catalonia (UPC), and SPOSHO were responsible for the eight edition (SHO2012). The main aim of the event is to disseminate results from research from universities and research institutions, in particular amongst OH&S practitioners and the general public. A second aim is to establish a network of international researchers working in the broad domain of OH&S, not limited to occupational safety and hygiene, but also including the ergonomics domain.

The symposium was held on February 9–10 at Guimarães, located in the Northern part of Portugal. The town is one of the country's most important historical cities. Its centre was registered as an UNESCO World Heritage Site, making it one of the largest and most attractive tourist centres in the region. Also, jointly with Maribor, Guimarães is European Capital of Culture during 2012.

This eight edition of the event had more than 300 attendants, from seven different countries and with a very wide professional and background spectrum, such as OH&S practitioners, scientists, teachers, managers, psychologists, and ergonomists. For the first time, an electronic platform for submission and revision was used, processing more than 200 papers from, approximately, 400 authors. The papers were selected by the international scientific committee, composed of more than 80 researchers/scientists within the broad domain of OH&S. Accepted papers were presented, together with eight keynote contributions. The increasing number of participants and submitted works do show the symposium is one of the most important events of the OH&S domain, both in Portugal, and Brazil.

2 Content of this special issue

This special issue will disseminate papers submitted to SHO2012, describing interventions, analysis, conceptual models, etc., applied to workplaces and/or working conditions (Table 1).

Table 1 Summary of the papers

<i>Authors</i>	<i>Themes</i>	<i>Industry</i>	<i>Perspective</i>	<i>Main insights</i>
Dias and Nunes	Risk assessment of work-related musculoskeletal disorders	Health	Intervention	Most of the analysed activities presented a moderate to high risk of development WMSD
Silva, Costa and Saraiva	Psychosocial risk factors	Public service	Intervention	White-collar works are exposed to work intensification. Blue-collar workers with constraints leading to a combination of physical, psychological and behavioural effects on health.
Domingues, Sampaio and Arezes	Ergonomics and integrating management systems	General	Exploratory	Discussion and analysis of the potential role of ergonomics on management systems integration
Neto	Learning from workplace accidents	Metal works	Conceptual and case study	Identification of barriers to organisational learning from work accidents

The papers' selection was also affected by difficulties, addressed by some authors. We can highlight the difficulty for the SHO2012 participants to develop their papers with a level of English compatible to the requirements of an international journal, and the short deadlines previewed for this special issue.

The papers selected are all from Portuguese authors. The first paper addresses risk assessment of work-related musculoskeletal disorders at a health unit, together with an intervention. The study seems to highlight the risky nature of the analysed tasks, or of some of them, and to emphasise the need to establish interventions plans for the same workplaces.

The analysis and identifications of psychosocial risk factors is the subject of the second paper. The study presented, described and analysed psychosocial components of the work. According to authors, this topic is not very visible in literature. This study was developed both with white and blue-collar workers of a Portuguese municipality service. The results did show some insights in the association between working conditions and health and well-being complaints reported.

The third paper describes an exploratory study on integrating management systems; quality, environment, occupational health and safety. Completed with an additional survey amongst Portuguese companies, authors highlight potential synergies between macro-ergonomics and integrated management systems.

Finally, the last paper is dealing with learning systems, related to occupational safety. The author identifies some opportunities and obstacles to this organisational learning process. The paper is complemented with a case study in a metal works industry, where obstacles to organisational learning are revealed.