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Oral healthcare for the aging was severely disrupted during the pandemic of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19). Transformative changes in care delivery involved teledentistry, mobile/portable dentistry, minimally invasive dentistry, aerosol minimization, and interprofessional oral care. Management of chronic oral health problems evolved through periods of limited to no access to daily and professional oral healthcare. Access to care has been influenced by availability of the oral care workforce, variability in long term care policy, and the lack of funding to cover medically necessary services delivered via asynchronous telehealth technologies. Impacts were identified six and twelve months into the pandemic. These will be compared to the state of oral healthcare for the aging 18 months from the start of the pandemic. The impact of vaccination on access to care will be explored. Variability between states (Idaho/Michigan/Minnesota/Rhode Island) will be addressed. Directions of new and needed research opportunities will be discussed.

Session 3615 (Symposium)

POST-RETIREMENT PAID WORK AND INEQUALITIES AT OLDER AGES

Chair: Benjamin Shaw

Co-Chair: Kevin Cahill

Discussant: Michael Giandrea

Participation in paid work frequently extends beyond pensionable age, with the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development observing, in “Pensions at a Glance” (2017, pp. 126–7), that effective retirement ages in high-income countries exceed normal full-pension-eligibility ages by 10 months for men and two months for women. While working after pensionable age is becoming ever more common, not all workers on the cusp of retirement are able to continue in their current position or find a new job. Remarkably, little is known about the implications of unequal access to post-retirement work for social and income inequalities in later life, nor how job quality might change as people work into the years normally set aside for retirement. The four papers in this symposium address the following questions: 1) do bridge employment transitions exacerbate or mitigate income inequality later in life? 2) how does job quality (job satisfaction, physical and psychosocial working conditions) compare before and after pensionable age? 3) which processes lead to changes in working conditions in the late career? and 4) might empirical and theoretical gains be made by considering post-pensionable-age paid work as a specific career stage? The presenters use longitudinal data from the United States (the Health and Retirement Study, HRS), Sweden (Swedish Longitudinal Occupational Survey of Health, SLOSH), and Japan (Japanese Study of Aging and Retirement, JSTAR) complemented by interviews with older workers in Sweden. This symposium will provide insights into the nature and consequences of working after pensionable age in contrasting institutional settings.

DOES BRIDGE EMPLOYMENT MITIGATE OR EXACERBATE INEQUALITIES LATER IN LIFE?

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This paper explores how gradual retirement impacts inequality later in life, with a focus on transitions from career to bridge employment. We use 26 years of longitudinal data from the Health and Retirement Study to document the various pathways that older Americans take when exiting the labor force, and examine how bridge employment impacts non-housing wealth and total wealth, including the present discounted value of Social Security benefits. We find that gradual retirement in the form of bridge employment neither exacerbates nor mitigates wealth inequalities among Americans who held career jobs later in life. We do find evidence that wealth inequalities grow among the subset of older career workers who transition from career employment to bridge employer at older ages. These findings provide quantitative evidence that bridge employment at older ages is taken by those who need to continue working financially and those who continue working for nonpecuniary reasons.

HAVING A POST-RETIREMENT JOB: IMPROVISATION AND CONTAINING COMMITMENTS

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This qualitative paper focuses on individuals who work after pensionable age, a distinctive period in the late career when workers are supported by the known and reliable income of a pension. Using constant comparative analysis, we analyzed interviews from a purposive sample of 25 Swedish people in their late sixties and early seventies. We examined conditions for being in paid work in terms of enabling factors (self-employment, shift work, shortage occupation), improvisation, and the role of chance. The interviews revealed that post-retirement workers took charge of the aspects of work that mattered most to them, evading the disciplinary aspects of work by controlling scheduling and limiting the duration of their commitment. These constrained commitments had knock-on effects of improving psychosocial working conditions. Women and immigrants—groups facing low pensions—experienced the greatest financial consequences of being unable to work in their retirement years in order to supplement their pension income.

CHANGES IN JOB QUALITY AS PEOPLE WORK BEYOND PENSIONABLE AGE IN SWEDEN

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