PRACTICAL GUIDE TO UNDERSTANDING PSYCHOSOCIAL RISKS AND PROTECTING THE HEALTH OF PHD STUDENTS
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I. Something is Wrong – but What Exactly?

- Do you feel stuck in your research work, are you faced with regular failures in your experiments?
- Do you have an overwhelming amount of work that you feel you can’t cope with?
- Do you feel isolated, do you feel a lack of interaction and support from your supervisor, from your team?
- Do you have imposter syndrome, that you’re not up to the task?
- Are you wondering what you are doing in your doctorate, if you belong in your thesis?
- Do you face recurring relationship difficulties with people on your team or your supervisor?
- Do you feel strong pressure to produce results, papers?
- Do you feel tense, stressed?
- Do you sleep poorly and lack appetite?
- Do you have unexplained pain?

The doctorate is a professional journey, but also a personal journey that extends over a long period. It is a stimulating experience but also demanding in terms of the resources needed to carry it out. Psychosocial risks (PSR) may be part of this journey.

This can result in:

- Isolation: lack of social ties, supervision, etc.;
- A significant workload, a wide variety of tasks to be performed, responsibilities, etc.;
- Impostor syndrome: difficulties in positioning oneself professionally, in feeling legitimate, etc.;
- Recurring and significant relational difficulties with your supervisor or people on your team, etc.

If this describes you or someone you know, talk about it.
II. What are Psychosocial Risks?

Where do they come from?

PSRs arise from work situations that include one or more of the following factors:

- **Stress**: imbalance between a person’s perception of the constraints of their work environment and their perception of their own resources to cope with them;
- **Internal violence committed within the organization by employees**: moral or sexual harassment, exacerbated conflicts between people or between teams;
- **External violence committed against employees by people outside the company** (insults, threats, attacks, etc.).

⚠ Theses are risks that can be caused by the activity itself or generated by organization and workplace relations.

What do they lead to? How do they manifest themselves?

Exposure to these work situations can have consequences on the health of employees, in particular in terms of cardiovascular diseases, musculoskeletal disorders, anxiety-depressive disorders, professional burnout, and even suicide.

What signs should I look out for?

**At the individual level**: isolation, changing mood, silence, trouble sleeping, increased alcohol consumption, more or less food intake, jokes about suicide, scruffy appearance, long working hours, more absenteeism, anguish about writing, etc.

**At the team level**: decreased productivity, faulty communication, tensions, etc.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Risk factors</th>
<th>Psychosocial risks</th>
<th>Damage to health</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intensity and complexity of work</td>
<td>Stress Internal violence External violence</td>
<td>Cardiovascular illnesses Depression Anxiety Burnout Suicide [...]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
III. Where to Get Help?

First, rely on **the contacts involved in your thesis:**

- Your supervisor(s);
- Your laboratory director;
- Your doctoral school director.

Your **individual monitoring committee** (CST in French) is also the place to express the difficulties you may encounter.

**Good to know:** a mediation procedure can be set up by the doctoral school (ED), you have all steps of the procedure explained in the “Charte des thèses”.

Finally, **your doctoral student representatives** within your ED are invaluable resources.

**You also have resources at your disposal in your institution** to support you, inform you and advise you on all questions related to your health. You can see health professionals on campus throughout the year.

**You will find below the list of contact details for the health services of the universities / higher education institutions of Lyon and Saint-Etienne.**

**Université Claude Bernard Lyon 1**

**University Health Service**

**Website:** [https://ssu.univ-lyon1.fr/](https://ssu.univ-lyon1.fr/)

**E-mail:** ssu@univ-lyon1.fr

**Phone (single number):** +33 (0)4 27 46 57 57

**Online appointment:** [https://univ-lyon1.contactsante.fr/RendezVous](https://univ-lyon1.contactsante.fr/RendezVous)

**Addresses:**

- Campus LyonTech-la Doua
  6 rue de l’Émetteur – Villeurbanne
- Campus Lyon Santé Est
  8 avenue Rockefeller – Lyon 8e
  Main building, ground floor, hall D, door 1108
- Campus Charles Mérieux (site de Lyon Sud)
  165 rue du Petit Revoyet – Oullins
  Administrative building, ground floor
In particular, you have free access to doctors and psychologists (psychological support), with or without an appointment. You will find all the information and contact details at this link.

**Reporting – discrimination, harassment and sexual violence:** [https://signalement.univ-lyon1.fr/](https://signalement.univ-lyon1.fr/)

**Université Lumières Lyon 2**

**University Health Service**

**Website:** [https://www.univ-lyon2.fr/campus/ssu](https://www.univ-lyon2.fr/campus/ssu)

**E-mail:** ssu@univ-lyon2.fr

**Phone:** +33 (0)4 78 77 43 10

**Online appointment:** [https://univ-lyon2.contactsante.fr/RendezVous](https://univ-lyon2.contactsante.fr/RendezVous)

**Address:**

- Campus Porte des Alpes
  5 avenue Pierre Mendès-France – Bron
  Building L

You can get medico-psychological help from a psychologist, in a private interview, by appointment.

For doctoral students with funding, you can contact the person in charge of prevention and working conditions

18 quai Claude Bernard – Lyon 7e
Belenos building
+33 (0)4 78 69 76 14

**Université Jean Moulin Lyon 3**

**University Service of Medicine, Prevention and Health**

**Website:** [https://www.univ-lyon3.fr/sante](https://www.univ-lyon3.fr/sante)

**E-mail:** secretariat.smpps@univ-lyon3.fr

**Phones:**

- Preventive medicine service – With appointment: +33 (0)4 78 78 79 83
- Nursing service – Without appointment: +33 (0)4 78 78 78 80
Address:

- Manufacture des Tabacs
  1C avenue des Frères Lumière – Lyon 8e
  Espace rue Sud – EG building – Ground floor

Action Unit against Discrimination and Harassment (CADH in French)

E-mail: discriminations@univ-lyon3.fr

**INSA Lyon**

University Health Service

Website: [https://www.insa-lyon.fr/fr/sante-et-social](https://www.insa-lyon.fr/fr/sante-et-social)

- **For every PhD student**
  
  FEDORA Department (doctoral studies)
  fedora-doc@insa-lyon.fr
  +33 (0)4 72 43 85 61

  PSR reporting within the institution: emt@insa-lyon.fr

  Support and information listening unit against discrimination, harassment and gender-based and sexual violence: cellule.ecoute@insa-lyon.fr

- **For doctoral students (not funded by INSA Lyon)**

  Student Preventive Medicine Department (SMPE in French)
  smpe@insa-lyon.fr

  CAP Service, two psychologists are available to offer psychological support and answer any questions
  service.cap@insa-lyon.fr

  Students’ social worker
  service.social-etudiants@insa-lyon.fr

- **For doctoral students funded by INSA Lyon**

  Staff Preventive Medicine Service (SMPP in French)
  smpp@insa-lyon.fr

  Social worker
  serv.social-personnel@insa-lyon.fr
Do you have an INSA Lyon employment contract?

MGEN partnership: Welcoming and Listening Area (EAE in French)

The MGEN offers three appointments per year with a clinical psychologist. To make an appointment, you must call the dedicated number: +33 (0)805 500 005. It is also possible to speak on the phone with a work psychologist. These services are completely free thanks to the partnership.

École normale supérieure (ENS) de Lyon

Preventive Medicine Service


E-mail: service.medical@ens-lyon.fr

Phone (single number): +33 (0)4 72 72 88 13

Addresses:

- Site Monod
- Site Descartes
  15 parvis René Descartes – Lyon 7e
  Ground floor – D2 Building

École Centrale de Lyon

Health Center

Address:

- 36 avenue Guy de Collongue – Écully
  U building – Ground floor

Phone: +33 (0)4 72 18 64 01

Université Jean Monnet

Preventive Medicine Service

Website: [https://www.univ-st-etienne.fr/fr/service-de-sante-universitaire/pour-les-etudiants.html](https://www.univ-st-etienne.fr/fr/service-de-sante-universitaire/pour-les-etudiants.html)
Contact information:

- 10 rue Tréfilerie – Saint-Étienne
  +33 (0)4 69 66 11 00
  Open from Monday to Friday from 8am to 12pm and 1pm to 4pm

- Maison du Campus
  12 avenue de Paris – Roanne
  +33 (0)4 77 44 89 66
IV. To go further...

In order to improve your knowledge of the French healthcare system and facilitate your access to healthcare, the Université de Lyon, in partnership with its institutions, the Crous de Lyon and with the support of the Région Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes, lists in the portal “My Health” all information, procedures, devices and contacts relevant to your physical and mental health: https://masante.universite-lyon.fr/.

In addition, the Ministry of Higher Education and Research has put in place a psychological support system to give students access to consultations with accredited psychologists, free of charge and without advance payment of costs: https://santepsy.etudiant.gouv.fr/.

10 simple rules to improve work-life balance in academia

1. Long hours are not synonymous with productive hours.
2. Review your options for flexible working practices.
3. Set limits on where you work and how much time you spend.
4. Adopt strategies that increase your efficiency and productivity.
5. Have a long-term strategy to help you prioritize, and review it regularly.
6. Make your health a priority.
7. Interact with your family and friends on a regular basis.
8. Take the time to volunteer or make similar commitments that are important and meaningful to you.
9. Research or help create peer and institutional support systems.
10. Open a dialogue on the importance of work-life balance and advocate for systemic change.

Make your health a priority!

- Eat a healthy diet;
- Get enough sleep;
- Prioritize your physical and mental health;
- Try meditation or mindfulness exercises;
- Devote time to leisure and relaxation.