

Improvement of work ability assessments in Insurance Medicine: Results of the Thesis



September 11th, 2014

EUMASS



Patricia M. Dekkers-Sánchez, MD, PhD
patricia.dekkers@uwv.nl

Academic Medical Center, University of Amsterdam, Amsterdam
Coronel Institute of Occupational Health,
Research Center for Insurance Medicine, The Netherlands



Research Center for Insurance Medicine: collaboration between AMC-UWV-VUmc-UMCG



Faculty Disclosure

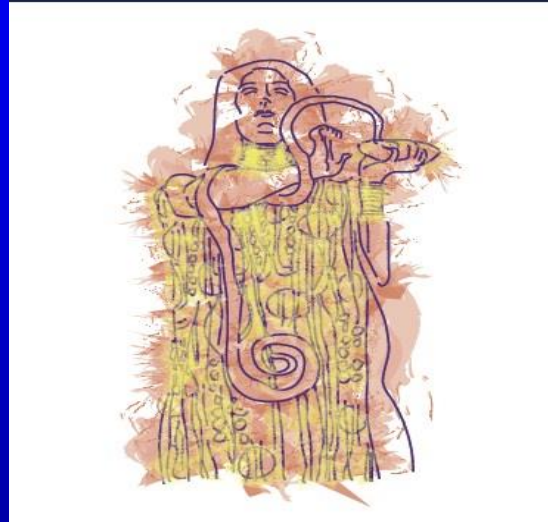
| | |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | No, nothing to disclose |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | |

Name: Patricia M. Dekkers-Sánchez

Date: 11 September 2014

WORK ABILITY ASSESSMENT OF
EMPLOYEES ON LONG TERM
SICK LEAVE IN
INSURANCE MEDICINE

PATRICIA DEKKERS-SÁNCHEZ



Thesis

Patricia M. Dekkers-Sánchez
Amsterdam, 20-11-2013



Research Center for Insurance Medicine: collaboration between AMC-UWV-VUmc-UMCG

Outline

- Background
- Aim
- Research questions
- Design
- Methods
- Results
- Conclusions
- Questions



Background



- Long term sick leave: high financial costs, personal suffering
- Lack of scientific information on factors that perpetuate long term sick leave or promote RTW
- Different factors influence work ability
- Assessment of factors associated with long term sick leave is important to promote RTW



Aim



- The aim of the thesis is to contribute to the improvement of work ability assessments of employees on long term sick leave.



Research questions



1. Which factors hinder or promote return to work (RTW) of employees on long term sick leave?
2. Which factors that hinder or promote RTW should be considered during the work ability assessment of employees on long term sick leave?



Research questions



3. Is it feasible to implement a checklist to assess factors affecting work ability in the daily practice of Dutch insurance physicians (IPs)?



Design



- To gather knowledge about factors that are important to include in work ability assessments.
- Professionals' consensus
- Development of a checklist with relevant factors to RTW
- Implementation of the checklist in daily practice of Dutch IPs.



Methods



1. A systematic literature search
2. Focus group interviews: 27 disability claimants
3. Semi-structured interviews: 23 vocational rehabilitation counsellors
4. Nationwide Delphi study under 102 experienced IPs
5. Nationwide implementation study



Results (1)

Question 1: Literature study



- Which factors are associated with continued sick leave among workers on sick leave for at least six weeks?
 - There are no published studies on perpetuating factors related to long term sick leave.
 - Weak evidence: older age and history of sickness absence.

Chapter 2: Dekkers-Sánchez et al. Factors associated with long-term sick leave in sick listed employees: a systematic review. *Occupational and Environmental Medicine* 2008; 65:153-157



Results (2)

Question 1: Focus groups



- Which factors hinder or promote RTW, according to employees on long term sick leave?
 - Aside from sickness, non-medical factors can hinder RTW of employees on long term sick leave.
 - Work-related factors and Personal factors promote RTW of employees on long term sick leave.

Chapter 3: Dekkers-Sánchez PM et al. A qualitative study of perpetuating factors for long term sick leave and promoting factors for return to work.

Journal of Rehabilitation Medicine 2010; 42:544-552



Results (3)

Question 1: Interviews



- Which factors promote sustained RTW of employees on long term sick leave, according to vocational rehabilitation counsellors?
 - Employee-related factors
 - Factors related to the communication
 - Work-related factors
 - Social environmental factors

Chapter 4: Dekkers-Sánchez PM et al. What promotes sustained return to work of employees on long term sick leave? Perspectives of vocational rehabilitation professionals. *Scand J Work Environ Health* 2011; 37:481-93



Results (4)

Question 2: Delphi study



- Which relevant factors, according to IPs, should be taken into account during the assessment of work ability?
 - **Factors liable to hinder RTW:**
 - 1-inefficient coping style
 - 2-negative illness perceptions
 - 3-secondary gain of illness
 - 4-inappropriate advice of treating physicians
 - 5-cognitions/behaviour that hinder RTW
 - 6-inability to accept limitations.



Results (5)

Question 2: Delphi study



- **Factors liable to promote RTW:**
 - 1-Positive attitude towards RTW
 - 2-Work motivation
 - 3- Early vocational rehabilitation
- According to Dutch IPs: non-medical factors can hinder or promote RTW of employees on long term sick leave.

Chapter 5: Dekkers-Sánchez PM et al. What factors are most relevant to the assessment of work ability of employees on long-term sick leave?

The physicians' perspective. *Int Arch Occup Environ Health* 2013; 86(5):509-518



Results (6)

Question 3: Implementation study



- Is it feasible to implement a checklist with relevant factors to RTW in the daily practice of IPs?
 - 89% IPs used the checklist
 - 90% IPs report factors using the checklist
 - The implementation of the checklist in daily practice of IPs is feasible

Chapter 6: Dekkers-Sánchez PM et al. Implementation of a checklist to assess factors relevant for work ability assessments of employees on long term sick leave. Int Arch Occup Environ Health 2014.
Article DOI: 10.1007/s00420-014-0975-



Conclusions (1)



1. Which factors hinder or promote RTW?

- 30 factors can promote RTW
- 27 factors can hinder RTW

2. Which factors should be considered in the assessment of work ability of employees on long term sick leave?

- 6 factors that hinder RTW
- 3 factors that promote RTW



Conclusions (2)



3- Is the implementation of a checklist with relevant factors to RTW feasible?

- The implementation of a checklist with relevant factors to RTW is feasible.

Dekkers-Sánchez PM (2013). Work ability assessments of employees on long term sick leave in Insurance Medicine (Doctoral Dissertation). Amsterdam, University of Amsterdam.



Conclusions (3)



- The checklist to assess factors relevant to work ability assessments of employees on long term sick leave seems to be a useful tool to assess barriers and facilitators for RTW of long-term sick-listed employees.



Factors that promote RTW

Factors that hinder RTW

RTW

- 1- Work motivation
- 2- Positive attitude towards RTW
- 3- Early RTW vocational rehabilitation

- 1- Inefficient coping style
- 2- Negative illness perceptions
- 3- Secondary gain of illness
- 4- Inappropriate advice of treating physicians
- 5- Cognitions, behaviour
- 6- Inability to accept limitations



Take home message



- Insurance Physicians need to be aware of the factors that hinder or promote RTW in order to eliminate or reduce barriers to RTW and stimulate the facilitators of RTW.





patricia.dekkers@uww.nl