

**From Biomedical Disability
to Ability-based Health
in Psychiatrists' and Psychology Specialists'
Social Security Certificates**

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The study was recently published online

- “Usefulness of an ability-based health model in work ability assessments provided by psychiatrists and psychology specialists writing social security certificates”

IN:

Disability
and
Rehabilitation

Paradigmatic instability in social security medicine

- The classical model of work disability is the biomedical disability model.
- This biological/physiological model abstracts away psychological and social parameters.
- But in work disability/ability assessments these parameters are basic.
- New models are needed!
- Our question:
 - By which models do health care experts assess *work disability/ability* of long-term patients in mental health care?

Material and methods

- **Textual analysis and interpretation of social security certificates**
 - 86 certificates from 66 long-term psychiatric patients.
 - 18 certificates assessed work ability
- **Three models of work (dis)ability were designed by us in reflective interaction with the text**

Nordenfelt: *Health is ability, given standard environments, to reach person's vital goals*

- **A) Three basic health factors**
 - **Abilities**
 - **Environments**
 - **Goals/intentions/motivations/will**
- **B) Concept of health pertains to whole person!**
 - **Not only general, but also particular (specific, concrete) descriptions, of the person's context**

The three designed models of work (dis)ability:

- **Biomedical disability model, BDM**
- **Mixed health model, MHM**
- **Ability-based health model, AHM**

Work ability models and corresponding patterns of assessment

- **Biomedical disability model** -> Gradual work training - in abstract terms
- **Mixed health model** -> Partial work ability approach: health factors described – but not fully in context
- **Ability-based health model** -> Holistic work ability approach: All three health factors described – in a specific context

Biomedical disability model, BDM

- **Disability is caused by disease.**
 - Health is lack of disease, and a normal condition. Health factors are therefore generally nothing to care about!
- **Work environment is, however, the one health factor described in the certificates.**
- **Descriptions are only general, following natural science.**

...and its corresponding *gradual work training* pattern

- An environmental facilitator is described
 - in general terms – and consists of:
 - A place for gradual trying out over time
 - Follow-up
 - Adjusted work arrangement

Mixed health model, MHM

- **One, two or all three health factors are added to the descriptions**
 - **Environments: Not only work environment, but also social support and relationships.**
- **Even when all three health factors are described, they are not described in the particular person's context.**
 - **Some assessments are based on neuropsychological examination.**

Ability-based health model, AHM

- All the three health factors are described.
- At least one ability, or critical skill, is assessed in the person's *particular context*, consisting of goal and environment.

....and its corresponding *holistic work ability approach*

- The claimant's abilities are linked to particular intentions and facilitators or opportunities – perhaps also barriers – in the environment.
- The claimant is a person who as an agent consciously interacts with her/his environment.

Two other patterns also – not linked to any special model

- **A) Medical treatment is enough**
- **B) Special vulnerability – which attached importance to the claimant's psychological environmental barriers at work**

Conclusion

- Applying the *ability-based health model* (AHM) in work ability assessments foregrounds claimants' abilities in a context of concrete goals and work-related opportunities, as a unity.
- An AHM seems practically useful also in other sectors of health care, where patients with chronic diseases are being helped to attain their goals in their own specific situations – e.g., rehabilitation.