An international scoping review of workplace adjustments for employees with mental illness

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Purpose

• To explore what is known about workplace adjustments for people with mental illness
  • Which adjustments are most frequently negotiated?
  • What are the costs and benefits?
What are workplace adjustments?

- Workplace adjustments (also known as accommodations or modifications) refer to adjustments designed to enable people with disabilities to fulfil the requirements of a job, such as changes to:
  
  - Scheduling
  - Job tasks
  - Social support
  - Other workplace conditions
Background

• People with a mental illness have a right to reasonable adjustments in the workplace in many countries internationally.

• Barriers to negotiating adjustments may include:
  • a lack of awareness regarding disability discrimination legislation
  • stigma – leading to a reluctance to disclose
  • the intangible nature of workplace adjustments for people with mental illness
Background

- Supported employment services support people with mental illness to get and keep a job, including negotiating reasonable adjustments
- Occupational rehabilitation services and occupational therapists across a range of settings may also play a role in supporting employment participation
- However little is known about the types, frequencies, costs and benefits of workplace adjustments
Methods - Overview

- A literature search of relevant peer reviewed research articles was conducted using five electronic databases (1993 – 2013)
  - CINAHL, PsycINFO, MEDLINE, EMBASE, Cochrane Library
- Case descriptions, reports, and opinion papers were excluded
- McMaster Critical Review forms completed to extract data and assess quality of eligible articles
- Evidence table was developed
Eligible Studies

• 10 eligible articles related to 9 studies

• Varied quality

• Majority were conducted in USA (individual studies from UK, Canada, Sweden, and the Netherlands)

• Three of the studies only included participants with high prevalence mental illness
Types and Frequencies

The most frequently adjustments were:

1. Assistance from employment support worker during hiring or on the job
2. Flexible scheduling/reduced hours
3. Modified training and supervision
4. Modified job duties/description

Physical accommodations in the workplace

(MacDonald-Wilson et al, 2002; Fabian et al, 1993; Granger, 2000)
Costs and Benefits

• The vast majority of adjustments had no direct costs
  (Wang et al, 2011; MacDonald-Wilson et al, 2002; Fabian et al, 1993; Granger, Baron & Robinson, 1997)

• None of the studies reviewed measured the indirect costs

• Preliminary evidence suggests that workplace adjustments may improve job tenure and performance
  (Fabian et al, 1993; Wahlin et al, 2013)
Summary and Implications

• There is likely an unmet need for workplace adjustments for people with mental illness

• Education is required for employers, rehabilitation professionals, and employees to increase understanding of disability discrimination legislation and workplace adjustments for people with mental illness

• Workplace adjustments are an important area for further research
Thank you

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Workplace Accommodations for People with Mental Illness: A Scoping Review

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