Stakeholders’ role in the disclosure of a mental health condition, implementation of work accommodations, and job tenure for people with mental disorders

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Context

WANSS: Work Accommodations and Natural Support Scale
Social Firms Comparative study
Supervisor study
Stakeholders’ involvement

From 35% to 45% of all work absences are due to CMD
After 1 year, from 25% to 30% are still on sick leave
50% relapse (depression)

Common Mental Disorders (CMD)
On sick leave
Rehab
RWT
Unemployed
Sustainable RTW

80% do not obtain competitive employment
40% to 60% obtain employment when registered in SE programs

Severe Mental Disorders (SMD)
Job tenure
Job acquisition
Within 6 months, 50% lose their job
After 1 year, 10% keep their job

In their systematic review, Dewa et al. (2016) showed that:
- well-described organizational policies regarding the roles and responsibilities of stakeholders,
- a disability leave plan,
- work accommodations.

Cullen et al. (2017) added in their review of Effectiveness of Workplace Interventions in Return-to-Work (MSD, pain-related, CMD) 4 domains:
- Coordination between stakeholders,
- CBT interventions,
- work accommodations,
- Combination of the above 3.

Gragnano et al. (2017) conducted a Review of Reviews Supporting a Cross-Disease Approach (CA, CMD, CVD):
- The most important common factors are: level of strain and work ability perceived by the worker.
- For 2/3 (CMD/CA), supervisor and co-worker support is an important predictor.
- Among recommendations for interventions: To create a supportive worker-supervisor relationship.

Job tenure, work accommodations, and natural supports

When natural supports are not in place, employers as well as employees with a work disability should be supported to ensure that work accommodations are provided when the demand is reasonable and the accommodations are feasible.

Authors describe reasonable accommodations those that do not slow down the productivity of the enterprise, cause undue hardship, or generate excessive costs.

MacDonald-Wilson et al. (2011) further adds that individuals may be able to obtain needed accommodations without disclosing their disability status, if natural supports are present in the workplace.
The goal of this study is to validate a WA and NS scale – **WANSS** – for people with SMD receiving SE services, and to determine which ones significantly predict job tenure.

## The WANSS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimension</th>
<th>Exemples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Support from different stakeholders</td>
<td>Do you receive support from your peers (other people in SE programs)?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Do you receive support from your family?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Do you receive support from your friends?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presence of job coach</td>
<td>Was your employment specialist present when you were hired?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Does your employment specialist visit you on the job?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Are there meetings with your employment specialist, your supervisor and yourself?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informational, instrumental, and appraisal support</td>
<td>Do your coworkers or supervisor take time in order to assist/ orient you?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Are you provided with a coworker buddy?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Are you provided with feedback from your supervisor and/or coworker(s)?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Corbière, Villotti, Lecomte et al., 2014
The WANSS

**Dimension** | **Exemples**
--- | ---
**Training** | Are tasks introduced gradually (i.e., introduce tasks one at a time to allow you to become accustomed to your job)?
| Do you have access to extra training to learn particular skills?
| Is training provided for coworkers about mental health problems?

**Schedule flexibility** | Are you able to have time off for clinic/medical appointments?
| Are you able to have time off without pay?
| Are you able to have a flexible schedule (i.e., flexible working hours and break times, permission to begin and finish work later because of difficulties waking up early in the morning, permission to leave work early for medical appointment, etc.)?

**Work environment** | Are you able to make changes in the spatial arrangement of your workplace (such as the direction your chair faces to decrease distractions, etc.)?
| Are you able to change the noise levels?
| Are you able to change the lighting?

Corbière, Villotti, Lecomte et al., 2014

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**The WANSS: Results**

- 51 participants (45.1%) **disclosed** their mental illness to their employer.
- The average implementation of WA and NS for **participants who disclosed** their mental disorder ($M = 19.51$, $SD = 7.24$) and participants who did not disclose ($M = 15.69$, $SD = 7.19$), is significantly different ($t(111) = 2.79$, $p = .01$).
- **Disclosure** has been found to be **positively related to** the total score of **the WANSS** ($r = .26$, $p = .01$).
- Furthermore, **people who disclose** their mental illness to the employer are more likely to mention the presence of a **job-coach** in the work environment ($r = .22$, $p = .05$), to **receive supervisor and co-worker supports** ($r = .27$, $p = .01$), and **training** ($r = .20$, $p = .05$).

Corbière, Villotti, Lecomte et al., 2014
The WANSS: Results

• Participants with a higher score on the “Informational, instrumental and appraisal support from co-workers and the supervisor” subscale was associated with reduced risk of losing the job (HR=.79; 95% CI=.72 – .88; P<.01).

• More specifically:
  • Participants who received more rewards or recognition from the supervisor or from colleagues reduced their risk of losing their job by 62% (HR=.38; CI=.19 – .75; P<.01).
  • Participants who could exchange work tasks with colleagues reduced their risk of losing their job by 62% (HR=.38; CI=.19 – .82; P<.01).

International Comparison

Corbière, Villotti, Lecomte et al., 2014
Social businesses

To provide supportive and less discriminatory work environment to disadvantaged individuals

Social cooperatives (1970s)
Social enterprises (1990s)
Social firms (2000s)

Study design

The aim of the study is to learn more about the process of accommodating mentally disabled employees inside social business operating in three different countries: **Italy, Canada and Australia**

Italy  
N=30

Canada  
N=30

Australia  
N=30

Matched on age, gender, level of education and diagnosis

The survey focused on: 1) demographics, including age, gender and education of people working with psychiatric disorders; 2) accommodations and natural supports available to perform their working tasks in social business.
Return to work, depression, and work accommodations

The goal of this study was to determine which contributions actually facilitate employees' RTW, and to identify the work accommodations most frequently implemented by supervisors at the actual time of their employee's RTW.
Return to work, depression, and work accommodations

### 74 ISs

- **58 (78%)** Employees already back at work after depression
- **16 (22%)** Employees still absent from work for depression

Negrini, Corbière, Lecomte et al., 2017

### IS

- Gender, Age, level of education
- Job position
- Attitudes (Social and Stereotypes)
- Intentions: preparation of the RTW, information about RTW

### Employee

- Gender, Age
- Employment status, job seniority, absences
- Source of the depression

### RTW Process

- Before the absence: quality of the relationship, diagnosis disclosure
- During the absence: contacts
- Preparation of the RTW: ISs’ motivation, ISs’ pressure to RTW

### Organisation

- Size
- Sector
- Legislation

Negrini, Corbière, Lecomte et al., 2017
Return to work, depression, and work accommodations

Final Cox regression analysis

RTW Process
IS's motivation to take measures to facilitate the RTW of their employees

RTW

HR = 1.34, 95% CI = 1.03-1.74, p<0.05

Negrini, Corbière, Lecomte et al., 2017

Return to work, depression, and work accommodations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Work Accommodations</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The most frequently implemented (≥ 90%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervisor takes time to assist orient the employee</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervisor provides rewards or recognition to the employee</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervisor provides emotional support to the employee</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job description is clearly defined (e.g., no role ambiguity, no role conflict)</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employee has access to water in a workspace or private space to take his/her medication</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employee has time off for clinic/medical appointments</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employee has phone access to the person in charge of the RTW process during working hours (e.g., health professional, RTW coordinator)</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tasks are introduced gradually.</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervisor provides feedback on the work done by the employee</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coworkers provide emotional support to the employee</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The least frequently implemented (≤ 40%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training provided to coworkers about depression or other mental health disorders</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Availability of transportation such as buses or taxis</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Possibility of reducing the noise level</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Possibility of reducing the lighting intensity</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training provided to supervisors about depression or other mental health disorders</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: “Emotional support” is defined as the supervisor’s ability to sustain cohesion, be empathetic, communicate, respond to the employee’s needs and highlight his or her strengths [33].

“Coworkers” refers to others employees working with the person who was absent due to depression.

Negrini, Corbière, Lecomte et al., 2017
Work accommodations and disclosure

Dialectical process and not a single binary decision: Why, what, how, when and to whom to disclose his/her mental condition?

Numerous reasons for disclosing (personal, interpersonal and work environmental factors)

Potential consequences:
+ work accommodations
- stigma

Employment specialists and RTW coordinator recognize the importance of planned disclosure as a means to obtain access to work adjustments in the workplace and to prevent stigma.

PLAN: Managing personal information managing the pros and cons of disclosure of the mental disorder in the workplace

Stakeholders’ involvement

Potential stakeholders include:
- Physician
- OT/Psy
- Insurer
- Colleagues
- Return to work coordinator (CMD)
- Employment specialist (SMD)
- Supervisor
- HR
- Unions

Corbière, Toth, Villotti, & Waghorn, 2014

Corbière, 2017
On-going projects

Disclosing a psychiatric condition in the workplace: Evaluation of stigma and work outcomes (CIHR)
Researchers: Marc Corbière, Kate Toth, Tania Lecomte, Bonnie Kirsh, Heather Stuart, Patrizia Villotti, Djamel Berbiche.
Coordinator: Jean-Philippe Lachance

Return to work program for employees of a large private-sector organization / a large public organization who are on sick leave due to a common mental disorder (Research Chair – Mental Health and Work, CIUSSS de l’Est-de-l’Île-de-Montréal)
Researchers: Marc Corbière, Stéphane Guay, Alexandra Panaccio, & Tania Lecomte.
Coordinator: Maud Mazaniello

Supervisor and worker perspectives on workplace accommodations for mental health (Workers Compensation Board of Manitoba)
Researchers: Vicki Kristman, Marc Corbière, & William Shaw.

Preventing depression relapse and improving well-being at work (HealthyMinds Canada)
Researchers: Tania Lecomte, Marc Corbière.
Coordinator: Jean-Philippe Lachance

Work accommodations must be flexible, creative, safe, personalized, temporary or permanent, as well as based on the worker’s capacities, workplace challenges, and the worker’s personal concerns about the implementation of the return-to-work plan…
(Durand, Corbière, Coutu et al., 2014, p.583)

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