



Abstract Title: Addressing workplace stigma for injured workers managing chronic pain

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Introduction/Background

In Canada each year, up to 621,000 accepted lost time claims for workplace injuries occur (Association of Workers' Compensation Boards of Canada, 2017). The Canadian Injured Workers' Alliance (CIWA) recognizes that a large number of injured workers will develop chronic pain that is not adequately managed within return to work (RTW) or stay at work (SAW) planning. Misunderstandings about the profound negative impact of undermanaged chronic pain on the person's overall well-being, functioning and work performance often fuel harmful stigma within the workplace, which can impede transitions back to work. To ensure greater supports for injured workers CIWA instigated a multi-modal, multi-year project in 2014 titled, "*Creating A Way Forward - Developing Guides for Collaborative Practice and Support for Injured Workers Who Live and Work with Chronic Pain.*" This project strives, through research and stakeholder consultation, to connect multidisciplinary chronic pain management within RTW/SAW planning for injured workers and to provide knowledge resources for injured workers, helping professionals and employers.

Purpose

The goal of this workshop is to expand the knowledge base and inspire members of the helping professions, injured workers, and employers to promote collaborative work in chronic pain management within RTW/SAW planning, thereby creating healthy, productive, and tolerant, working environments.

Approach or Action

A 90-minute workshop format included: 1. presentations by our panellists that summarize research and knowledge domains developed within the "Creating a Way Forward" project which includes perspectives from injured workers/ helping professionals / employers regarding challenges and successes in pain management and RTW/SAW planning. 2. group discussions focused on known or prospective

strategies to improve pain management, integrate knowledge domains into practice, and alleviate workers stigma (Research Action Alliance on the Consequences of Work Injury & Workplace Safety and Insurance Board Injured Worker, 2011) and, 3. an open forum to summarize key points and next steps for the CIWA project.

Outcomes

Attendees gained: 1. a greater understanding of the challenges facing injured workers living with chronic pain, 2. a richer understanding of the knowledge domains that can be integrated to support injured workers living with pain, 3. an opportunity to share resources and identify strategies for intra-professional collaboration toward improving outcomes for injured workers with chronic pain while alleviating harmful stigma.

Conclusion

Addressing chronic pain management for injured workers and creating workplace environments that are sensitized to their needs are necessary for successful RTW transitions or SAW outcomes. Expanding knowledge within the injured worker, employer and helping professional communities has the potential to develop collaborations that will better support injured workers' overall well-being and productivity while creating healthy workplace environments.

References

Association of Workers' Compensation Boards of Canada (2017). 2015 Injury Statistics Across Canada: Number of Accepted Lost Time Claims 1982-2015.
Research Action Alliance on the Consequences of Work Injury & Workplace Safety and Insurance Board Injured Worker (2011). Stigma Framework Poster, Version 5.1.

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