

Poster-discussion: Work absence and return

P100 INTERVENING IN SUB-ACUTE SICKNESS ABSENCES: A LARGE POTENTIAL FOR BELGIAN OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH SERVICES

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Objectives We aim to present the opinion of sick-listed workers on their own sickness absence course and work resumption possibilities.

Methods A Belgian cross-sectional study included 1559 employees, aged 18–50 years, >8 weeks on sick leave. A standardised questionnaire with a 4-point Likert answer scale was used to obtain patient information on 1) sickness absence; the pathology causing the sickness absence, and the relation between the work and the sickness absence; 2) work resumption; the attitude towards work modifications, and the work resumption prognosis.

Results 1) Sickness absence. Pathology: 71% reported mainly an orthopaedic disorder, 15% a psychiatric disorder. Work-related pathology: 34% attributed the sick leave (fully or for a large part) to his work conditions. 2) Work resumption. Work modifications: 79% was – in expectation of fully recovery – (very or moderate) positive towards modified work or partial work resumption. Work resumption prognosis: 80% thought to resume work within the following 3 months, 9% feared not being able to work ever again.

Conclusions The results underline the need of 1) a multidisciplinary approach of sickness absence by occupational physicians, psychologists and ergonomists to address work-related sickness absences;; 2) temporarily adapted work possibilities to achieve early return to work, and timely detection of patients in need for work resumption initiatives (those fearing not being able to resume work in the next 3 months).