

Poster-discussion: Psychosocial working conditions

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ARE SURVEYS OF THE PSYCHOSOCIAL WORK PROFILE A MEANS TO REDUCE SICKNESS ABSENCE? A QUASI-EXPERIMENTAL STUDY

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Objectives Surveys of the psychosocial work environment are widely used for diagnostic and preventive purposes. Both the survey in itself and subsequent changes may contribute to improve the work environment but the evidence is circumstantial. This study examines if conducting surveys of

the psychosocial work environment and subsequently acting to improve those conditions has an effect on sickness absence.

Methods 5023 employees from 328 public service work units participated in psychosocial work profile surveys from 2002 to 2005. Satisfaction with psychosocial work conditions was measured by self-reports and each employee was assigned the average value of the work unit scores. Telephone interviews were conducted to gather information about actions taken in response to results from the surveys. Sickness absence was measured as short-term and medium-term absence spells during 6 months before and after the survey. A reference population comprised employees from similar workplaces who had not (yet) participated in the psychosocial work survey.

Results Comparing post-survey sickness absence with pre-survey levels we observed a marginal reduction of sick leave in the survey relative to the reference group: 0.08 days per employee during 6 months (95% CI 0.00 to 0.16) for short term absence and 0.05 (95% CI -0.10 to 0.21) for medium term absence.

Conclusions A large and comprehensive psychosocial work profile survey did not alter sick leave rates materially.