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Employers' needs - when right to work for disabled persons is to be realized

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According to UN standard rules, and international as well as Norwegian legislation, to secure access to employment for people with reduced function is a political objective. Since employment enables active participation in society, work might be an incentive to a meaningful life also for adults with a spinal cord injury. Statistics show however that disabled persons easily fall outside working life, and it might be questioned if this situation has emerged on the basis of the persons' qualifications or to attitudes in society and/or among employers.

For OTs, working within rehabilitation, knowledge of the employers' needs and attitudes is important when the aim is to help their patients to employment.

To gather information of what employers in firms with disabled employees with reduced mobility in six counties in Norway experienced as important for a successful work situation, focus discussions in groups with five to eight participants were arranged in each county.

For a successful adaptation at work, access to a variety of policy instruments, as well as the leaders' and the colleagues' attitudes, was reported as important. The employers' access to support, and their interest and knowledge of their employees' needs was essential. If the organization was in demand of the persons' qualifications seems also to be of vital importance for their change to come back in work.

During the rehabilitation period after a spinal cord injury, occupational therapists search for the person's potential and resources. When work is the objective, not only each person's capacity is of importance. If the ideal of equality in society is to be realized, effort in order to adapt the physical as well as the organizational work to the person's skills needs also to be attained. Therefore the leader's goodwill to make a reorganization of the work is essential. A central question in this discussion is also how the individual her/his self should be responsible for their choice in this situation, since the consequences due to their disability usually is outside their possibility of control.