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Effectiveness of Return to Work (RTW) programme for musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs) injured workers

Mohd Suleiman Murad¹, Louise Farnworth¹, Lisa O'Brien¹, Azman Mohammed¹

¹MARA University of Technology, Shah Alam, Malaysia, ²Monash University, Frankston, Australia,

³SOCSO Organization, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Introduction:

In previous studies, the common site that a person experienced MSDs are back and neck, and the average cost and sick days to effectively managing each case is USD\$ 1195 and 144.9 days. The impairment of body function and structure of MSDs is very complex issues and overall health recovery will take a longer time. Although previous researchers had captured RTW overall health outcome and its association with personal factors but the finding has limitation in framing the issues on bigger picture especially worker RTW experiences in each of RTW phases. SOCSO organization, in particular has been chosen for the study due to their adoption of Sweden bisopsychosocial model in managing MSDs in Malaysia. As Malaysia is different from Sweden in terms of population, ethnics, political and socioeconomic background, it is interesting to investigate the outcome of the study.

Objectives:

To determine the significant differences of overall health outcomes in every phases of RTW programme.

To determine the association of some personal and work related factors with overall health outcomes.

Methodology:

This is cross-sectional self administered survey using convenient sampling with 260 participants who had attended RTW programme since early 2005. The instruments used were VAS Analogue Scale, DASS scale, Oswestry 2.1a, Neck Disabilities Index, and quality of life SF-36v2.

Results:

The percentage of MSDs workers return to work is 64 % is greater compare to treatment 7.6 % and rehabilitation 28 %. There are significant differences of overall health outcomes between RTW phases and there is a relationship between personal and work related factors with overall health outcomes and all the health outcomes correlated to each other.

Conclusion:

Case managers and therapists need to plan further their management strategies not only at treatment and rehabilitation but at work place scenario. These overarching issues need to be explored; pain, anxiety, depression, stress, specific functional disabilities and quality of life.

Study contribution to the occupational therapy practice:

The study can help Occupational Therapist to enhance his or her professional role by managing

MSDs not only at clinical setting but also at working place.