

Return to Work - the Predictive Validity of the Assessment Instrument Worker Role Interview

Elin Ekbladh

Linköping University, Faculty of Health Sciences, Department of Social and Welfare Studies, Norrköping, Sweden

Introduction: Long-term sick-listing entails great costs for the society and suffering for the individual. As rehabilitation could decrease these costs, valid and reliable methods are then required for assessing work ability and identifying individual rehabilitation needs. There is a need to develop and investigate the validity of work-related assessments tools and in particular assessments concerned with psychosocial aspects in relation to return to work.

Objectives: The aims of this study were to investigate if and how the Worker Role Interview (WRI) can predict return to work and how the predictive validity of the WRI for return to work changes over a period of two years.

Methods: WRI is an assessment tool designed to identify psychosocial and environmental factors which influence a person's ability to return to work. Fifty three long-term sick-listed people constituted the study group. Differences in WRI ratings and the ability of WRI to correctly predict whether these people would fall into the working or non-working groups at 6, 12 and 24 month follow-ups were tested by Mann-Whitney test and logistic regression respectively

Results: The item 'Expectation of job success' which concerns the person's belief in their abilities in relation to return to work emerged as an important predictive factor for return to work in all statistical analyses. Eight of 16 items in WRI were rated differently between the working or non-working groups at one or more of the three follow-ups. The regression models based on the WRI ratings had an overall correct prediction rate ranging from 81% to 96% between the follow-ups.

Conclusion and contribution to practice and evidence base of occupational therapy: The WRI assessment contains items which predict return to work. This implies that the WRI is a useful tool for occupational therapist working with vocational rehabilitation for identifying individual rehabilitation needs for people who are sick-listed.