

An international scoping review of workplace adjustments for employees with mental illness

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Introduction/Rationale: People with a mental illness or disability have a right to reasonable adjustments in the workplace in many countries around the world. However, workplace adjustments (also known as workplace accommodations or modifications) for people with mental illness are poorly understood and rarely discussed.

Objectives: The purpose of this scoping review was to explore what is known about workplace adjustments for people with mental illness, including which adjustments are most frequently negotiated and their costs and benefits.

Method: A literature search of relevant peer reviewed research articles was conducted using five electronic databases (CINAHL, PsycINFO, MEDLINE, EMBASE and Cochrane Library). Case descriptions, reports, and opinion papers, and studies published before 1993 were excluded from the scoping review.

Results: Ten articles related to nine studies were identified as meeting the inclusion criteria for this review. The most commonly reported workplace adjustments for employees with mental illness were flexible scheduling/reduced hours, modified training and supervision, and modified duties/responsibilities. For clients of supported employment agencies, most adjustments related to assistance from their employment specialist. Few studies have investigated the outcomes associated with workplace adjustments, however there is some evidence to suggest that a larger number of adjustments are associated with longer job tenure. The vast majority of adjustments for people with mental illness were considered to have no direct costs, although little is currently known about potential indirect costs.

Conclusion: Knowledge and skills concerning workplace adjustments are important for occupational therapists to improve workforce participation and diversity in the workplace.