

Psychosocial Work Potential in People with Common Mental Disorders –A comparison before and after cognitive behavioural therapy

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Introduction: Sickness absence due to mental health problems has increased over the last decades. In Sweden persons with common mental disorders (CMD), such as depression, anxiety, and stress-related disorders, affecting working life have been offered Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT). There is no evidence that CBT leads to reduced sick leave, however, a work-focused CBT treatment may lead to increased work ability.

Purpose: To investigate and describe psychosocial work potential and time spent working for people with CMD before and after CBT.

Method: The study included 108 people with CMD. Psychosocial work potential of the study participants before and after CBT treatment was identified by using the Worker Role Interview (WRI). Time spent working was self-reported. Non-parametric and parametric statistics were used. Qualitative data i.e written notes for WRI items was analysed by manifest qualitative content analysis.

Results: Participants' working time and work potential increased significantly. The factors which changed from a hindrance to a support for return to work before and after treatment were "pursues interests", "work habits", "daily routines", and "adapts routines to minimize difficulties". The participants had adjusted their activity levels at work and in daily life by using strategies to limit activity, reducing their own expectations, asking others for help, pursuing interests and resting.

Conclusion: Rehabilitation results in terms of work ability can be enhanced if knowledge of how psychosocial factors such as motivation, activity patterns and the environment affect the individual's work potential are included in CBT treatment planning for people with common mental disorders.