

Supporting employers in handling cancer at the workplace: Development of a digital toolkit

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Category: Advocacy and policy report

Main theme: Theme 6 – People living with cancer

Subtopic: Wellness at work

Title: Supporting employers in handling cancer at the workplace: Development of a digital toolkit

Abstract text: Background and context:

The number of people diagnosed with cancer and living with its long-term consequences is rising. Annually, about 45,000 persons are diagnosed with cancer in Denmark and 40% receive the diagnosis at working age (Mehnert, 2013). As mortality rates from cancer have declined steadily over the past two decades because of developments in cancer screening and treatment options, return to work rates among cancer survivors in Western countries have successively increased. Therefore, resuming work during or after cancer treatment has become an important target in cancer rehabilitation (Stapelfeldt, 2020). However, cancer survivors experience a lack of support at workplace level; i.e. poor communication, a non-adjustable work environment requested due to reduced work ability, and discrimination, have been shown to hinder return to work (van Muijen, 2013). Thus, employer support in vocational rehabilitation may help cancer survivors to resume work.

Aim:

The aim was to develop and disseminate a campaign embedding a digital toolkit of information and practical advice targeting employers in order to support them in handling cancer at the workplace.

Strategy:

In order to meet the challenges and needs of employers handling cancer at the workplace, inspiration to the content of the toolkit was derived from workshops with managers and Human Resource professionals from over 200 companies in different industries. Inputs from the workshops were structured in topics and six overarching themes were selected. Finally, the themes were qualified by the Confederation of Danish Industry companies and the Central Organisation of Industrial Employees in Denmark.

Programme:

The six overarching themes of the content of the toolkit were:

- The first conversations with your employee about cancer
- Align expectations for the communication
- Adjustments of work demands and tasks
- Development of policies and procedures
- Information about professional counselling
- Learn about cancer

The campaign consisted of the website www.taghåndom.dk embedding the digital toolkit, printed campaign materials (flyers, post cards and posters), and campaign videos in which employers share experiences with cancer at the workplace.

Outcomes:

On launch day, the campaign had a reach of 105,906 persons at the official Facebook site of the Danish Cancer Society. The website embedding the digital toolkit has a stable number of visitors (approximately 70 visitors per month). A survey among visitors indicates that above 90 % gets useful information from the toolkit.

What was learnt:

Our work reveals that employers have an unmet need for knowledge about cancer and the potential late effects of the disease and treatment as well as for practical advice about how to provide better support for employees with cancer. To improve opportunities for cancer survivors in the labor market, more interventions targeting employer's needs and challenges handling cancer at the workplace, are needed.

Have you got a Conflict of Interest?: No

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