A Stakeholder-Centred Systematic Review of Systematic Reviews on Non-Modifiable Risk and Protective Factors for Work Absences Across Common Health Conditions

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Methods

With work absence across health conditions

• Review reported on non-modifiable factors that should be considered as having
• 37 full text systematic reviews met eligibility criteria and were included
• 142 full text articles underwent comprehensive review
• 2,467 unique records were identified

Figure 1. PRISMA Flow Diagram of Search Strategy

A common challenge facing stakeholders is the identification of relevant high quality research, and its translation into useful information to inform policy, training, and practice.

Academic and community stakeholders were engaged to participate in the identification, translation and implementation of credible, relevant knowledge to support best practices in disability prevention and management.

Purpose

As part of a collaboration between stakeholders and academics, we conducted a stakeholder-centred systematic review of systematic reviews to identify disability risk and protective factors associated with work-related and chronic disease health conditions impacting work-related absences and disability durations.

Results

- 2,467 unique records were identified
- 142 full text articles underwent comprehensive review
- 37 full text systematic reviews met eligibility criteria and were included
- Review reported on non-modifiable factors that should be considered as having strong and/or moderate level evidence for prediction of an increased risk of disability across a variety of health conditions

Table 1. Non-modifiable workplace and worker risk factors associated with work absence across health conditions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor Type</th>
<th>Evidence Level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Non-modifiable workplace factors found to have a moderate or strong evidence included:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower occupational status</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Non-modifiable worker factors found to have moderate or strong evidence included:</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Older age</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Poor personal functioning</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Increased psychological symptoms</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Increased clinical/complicating factors</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Decreased physical functioning</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>In cases of rheumatoid arthritis and low back pain</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

• Existence of a worker’s compensation claim
• Overweight status
• Increased emotional distress
• Non-married status
• Female gender
• Presence of respiratory conditions

Search Strategy: Identify keywords and pilot test search strategies.


Years: 2000 to 2011.

Systematic review inclusion criteria: Quantitative and qualitative meta-analyses, non-meta-analytic systematic reviews of both qualitative and quantitative literature for work-focused populations.

Inclusion assessment: Two or more independent reviewers analyzed literature in sequence of titles only, titles and abstracts, and full articles.

Final review: Comprehensive review and methodological screening of selected articles

Limitations

Systematic reviews are limited by availability of high quality primary studies, lack of consistency of methodological screening and reporting, and variability of outcome measures used.

Identification and translation of keywords and MESh terms across different databases was an iterative process; it is possible that some systematic reviews were missed.

Given resources available and the utilization of stakeholders in the process, the search strategy was limited to English.

Future Research

A synthesis focused on intervention studies, addressing identified risk and protective factors, should be conducted to inform best practices in preventing unnecessary disability.

To improve the quantity and quality of primary studies, establishment and promotion of standard functional outcome measures is needed.

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