

Supervisors' perspectives on work accommodations The case of Cancer UK.

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Set the scene (1):

- Approximately two million people living in the UK with diagnosis of cancer at the end of 2008 (CRUK, 2011)
- At the end of 2008, 191,900 men and 385,460 women aged 45-64 were cancer survivors in the UK (Maddams J., et al, 2009)
- Along with the obvious financial implications, participation in work is recognised as important for overall psychological and physical well being (Steiner JF., et al, 2004)
- Recent review of 64 studies (Menhert A., 2011) report approximately 64% of cancer survivors (range 24%-94%) were able to return to their employment

Set the scene (2):

Factors related to return to work:

- Age at diagnosis
- Cancer sites (liver, lung, brain & CNS, pancreatic, head & Neck and gynaecological cancers)
- Length of sickness absence
- Welfare policies
- Work environment and manual work
- Perceived employers' accommodation
- Advice from both employer and/or health professionals.

(Mehnert A., 2011; Taskila-Abbrandt T. et al, 2004; Scultz PN. Et al, 2002; Carlsen K. et al, 2008; Pryce J. et al, 2007; Amir Z. et al, 2008; Amir Z. et al, 2007)

Set the scene (3):

- A meta-analysis on Cancer Survivors and Employment (de Boer A. at al, 2009) indicates unfavourable outcomes include some changes in the prevalence of employment among people affected by cancer
- Due to the contradictory nature of the findings, and their dependence on cultural factors, it is not clear what is/are the reasons for these unfavourable outcomes
- Is it due to the consequences of cancer and its treatment alone?
- Or whether a diagnosis of cancer develops negative attitudes to work by patients and/or people related to them?

The current presentation will include three parts:

- 1. Findings from a recent UK population survey**
- 2. Findings from a UK survey of supervisors exploring their attitudes toward employees with cancer**
- 3. Discussion on how to provide the needed support for supervisors and who should deliver that.**

UK Population Survey

Aim: To identify and describe the impact of cancer diagnosis on survivors' work activities and their perceptions of their supervisors' reactions to a diagnosis of cancer.

Method: A quantitative cross-sectional survey approach.
Participants were purposely selected by Cancer Registry to facilitate recruitment of BME groups.
Inclusion criteria: Age – 21-60; Cancer sites with 5 years survival rates higher than 50% (i.e. breast, prostate, colorectal, bladder & Hodgkin), diagnosed 2-3 years before.

Analysis: Linear regression and binary, ordinal and multinomial logistic regression models. Demographic variables were included in the regression models to assess their associations with participants' response.

Results (1):

- **Demographic:** 382 people completed the survey; Mean age – 50 years (SD 7); 76% females; 90% White British; 69% married; 79% had a school based qualification, and 76% having a post school qualification.
- **Work situation:** Before diagnosis, 87% reported being in paid work to compare with 67% at the time the survey was completed;
Significant rises in percentages of unemployed (<1% to 4%), retired (4% to 17%), long term sick leave (1% to 7%), 25% stopped working after being treated for their cancer.
Nearly half (44%) worked the same number of hours before diagnosis compared with the time of the survey, BUT 43% worked fewer hours at the time of the survey.

Results (2):

Supervisors' reaction to a cancer diagnosis

The majority reported a positive reaction across a range of different aspects, most supervisors:

- did not ask to set an exact date for returning to work (73%);
- did not believe an employee with cancer was less able to perform (52%);
- did not think it was impossible to manage an employee with cancer (70%);
- were perceived to be very supportive during the whole process (76%);
- were happy for the employee to continue work before starting treatment (74%);
- made reasonable adjustments to the employee's normal duties (73%);
- stayed in touch while the employee was on leave for treatment (72%);

UK survey of supervisors - Aim

To explore supervisors' attitudes towards managing employees with a cancer diagnosis, by addressing the following questions:

1. Can factors underlying supervisors' attitudes be empirically identified?
2. Are there meaningful differences among the identified factors based on demographic variables (age, gender, experience) and/or organisation type?

UK survey of supervisors - Method

A review of the rehabilitation literature and information from in-depth interviews with 12 supervisors were used to design a short self-administered questionnaire, which include items covering the following themes: emotional burden, striking the balance between the individuals' and organisational needs, attitudes towards employing people with cancer, support from senior management and skills to cope with these eventualities;

The Questionnaire (14 items) was circulated on-line to supervisors working in the public sector, private and small to medium enterprises. Respondents were asked to rate the attitudes items using a five-point Likert type agreement rating scale (from strongly disagree = 1 to strongly agree = 5).

UK survey of supervisors Data Analysis

Data were entered into SPSS 13.0 software. Factorial structure was examined using principal factor analysis Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure (KMO). In addition, Barlett's Test of Sphericity was used to test whether the correlation matrix of this study is significantly different from the identity matrix.

The effect of demographic characteristics & organisational variables on the supervisors' attitudes was examined using multivariate analysis of variance.

Sample Characteristics (1)

- A total of 370 supervisors completed the on-line questionnaire
- 182 (49.2%) men and 187 (50.5% women)
- The majority (60%) had worked for the same organisation for more than 10 years
- 25% had managerial responsibility, past and present, for employee with cancer.

Sample Characteristics (2)

	N	%
<u>Age:</u>		
18 – 24 years	4	1
25-34 years	48	13
35-44 years	111	30
45-54 years	155	43
55+	48	13
<u>Organisational size:</u>		
1-9 employees	6	2
10-49 employees	15	4
50-249 employees	26	7
250-499 employees	8	3
500-900 employees	248	67

Sample characteristics (3)

	N	%
<u>Sector:</u>		
Private	166	45
Public	152	41
Voluntary	26	7
School based	26	7

<u>No. of employees supervised:</u>		
<5	67	18
5-10	115	31
11-20	92	25
21-49	63	17
50 +	33	9

Factor analysis (1)

A five-factor solution has been identified:

Factor 1: Fearful attitudes towards cancer survivors

Composed of 7 items dealing with negative attitudes and misperception about people with cancer and their role in the workplace. The Alpha coefficient = .75; Average score 1.88 (SD=.47).

Factor 2: Supportive attitude

Composed of 4 items dealing with positive attitudes towards the return to work process of employees with cancer. The Alpha coefficient = .62; Average score 3.90(SD=.60).

Factor 3: Supervisors' burden

Composed of 3 items dealing with additional demands placed on supervisors to manage employees with cancer. The Alpha coefficient = .53; Average score 3.33 (SD=.67).

Factor analysis (2)

Factor 4: Maintaining normality

Composed of 4 items dealing with maintaining a sense of normality for employees with cancer. The Alpha coefficient = .52; Average score 4.44 (SD=.56).

Factor 5: Financial benefits issues

Composed of 2 items dealing with financial benefits issues for people with cancer. The Alpha coefficient = .64; Average score 2.91 (SD=.72)..

Multivariate Analysis of Variance

A series of MANOVA's were conducted to test the effect of demographic/organisational variables on the 5 attitudes factors.

No significant effects were found with age, time as manager and experience in managing employees with cancer.

However, there were a few significant differences:

- (1) Female managers reported less fearful attitudes towards cancer diagnosis than men
- (2) Women also held more favourable attitudes towards maintaining normality for employees
- (3) Female were less concerned about additional workload burden as a result of managing employees with cancer than men
- (4) School based managers scored significantly higher on the financial benefits factors than manager in the voluntary and public sectors.

Summary (1)

Front line managers have both positive and negative attitudes about employing and retaining employees affected by cancer.

Positive: the importance of cancer survivors being provided with support in their effort to return to work and the role that work plays in returning to normality.

Negative: cancer survivors' ability to engage in work related activities and meet the demands of employment. Also, managers expressed some worries about the potential burden for accommodations

Managers reported difficulties in managing people with cancer diagnosis and even more important was the lack of support and guidance from senior management.

Supervisors reported the need for more advice and guidance to enable them to put the organisational policy regarding managing employees with disabilities into practice

Summary (2)

More research is needed to identify the nature of the advice and guidance required by supervisors.

Supervisors participated in this study tend to be ambivalent about hiring and retaining people with cancer. This ambivalence might have a significant implications for cancer survivors who want to return to work to either the same or a different employer.

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Discussion

1. How and what is needed to support supervisors in facilitate the return to work and job retention of their employees with long term conditions?
2. Who should deliver this support?



Thank you
very much