
Title registration for a review proposal: Employment Interventions to Facilitate Labor Force Participation for Cancer Survivors

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Submitted to the Coordinating Group of:

- Crime and Justice
- Education
- Disability
- Social Welfare
- Other:

Plans to co-register:

- No
- Yes
- Maybe
- Cochrane
- Other

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TITLE OF THE REVIEW

Employment Interventions to Facilitate Labor Force Participation for Cancer Survivors.

BACKGROUND

The problem

In 2008, Title I of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) was amended to include “major bodily functions” that interfere with daily living in the definition of disability, expanding the disability classification and associated job protections to cancer survivors. In the U.S. alone, an estimated 1.5 million people are diagnosed annually with some type of cancer (American Cancer Society, 2011). The issues affecting cancer survivorship are complex. The literature suggests that employment is an important stabilizing factor for cancer survivors (Arnold, 1999). However, research evidence also indicates that cancer survivorship tends to be correlated with unemployment (de Boer, Taskila, Ojajarvi, van Dijk, & Verbeek, 2009).

In 2011, de Boer, Taskila, Tamminga, Frings-Dresen, Feuerstein, and Verbeek conducted a Cochrane review of medical, psychological, and physical care on return-to-work outcomes with cancer survivors. Unlike this proposed review, the authors focused their search only on databases that house medical research: EMBASE, CINAHL, OSH-ROM, psycINFO, DARE, ClinicalTrials.gov, Trialregister.nl and Controlled-trials.com; these databases included no studies of vocational interventions aimed at work-related issues. With the articles they did review, they concluded that multidisciplinary interventions, such as psychological support and workplace adjustments, resulted in better emotional and physical quality of life for cancer survivors.

Other research findings suggest that cancer survivors are four times more likely to be employed when they receive employment assistance and support, such as job hunting services, or on-the-job training (Strauser et al., 2010). Further, the literature indicates that greater awareness of the workplace issues that cancer survivors face leads to more comprehensive rehabilitation plans and recovery (Center for Disease Control [CDC], 2011; Nathan, Haynes-Lattin, Sisler, & Hudson, 2011). However, little is known about which interventions are the most effective at helping cancer survivors participate in the labor force. Understanding the effectiveness of work interventions with cancer survivors could yield greater rewards for employees and employers alike (CDC, 2011; Kyle et al., 2011).

The population

The participant sample of study must include only adults 18 years or older who are eligible to work, have a history of a cancer diagnosis, and received an employment intervention that facilitated their participation in the labor force. The review is intended to identify effective work interventions that could be implemented by businesses and vocational support organizations working with cancer survivors.

The intervention

The study must address employment interventions or hypothesis testing of employment interventions with cancer survivors that facilitated their participation in the labor force, such as helping a cancer survivor stay in a job, find a new job, or return to work in a new capacity. We anticipate that interventions may fall into three categories, including behavioral, educational, or government agency supports. Further, interventions may include training, psychological support, environmental adjustments or accommodations, flexible or job-sharing work conditions, or job search and placement assistance.

Outcomes: What are the intended effects of the intervention?

This systematic review intends to examine evidence for employment interventions that facilitated cancer survivors' participation in the labor force. Eligible studies need to provide evidence for the effect of job-related interventions on employment status outcomes, such as wages, job skill training, work attendance, job accommodations or support, or job placement.

OBJECTIVES

This systematic review intends to examine experimental and quasi-experimental studies about employment interventions with cancer survivors over age 18 that facilitated their participation in the labor force. Our aim is to produce knowledge that will benefit cancer survivors, employers, and vocational service delivery professionals in a few ways. It would offer an assessment of the effectiveness of employment interventions. It may identify solutions that could inform knowledge transfer strategies targeted at these audiences. It could also be used to highlight research gaps that can inform research agendas in the future.

METHODOLOGY

I. Criteria for including studies in the review

a. Types of study designs to be included and excluded: description of eligible study designs, control/comparison groups, measures and duration of follow-ups

Study designs must include quantitative experimental and quasi-experimental methods, including randomized controlled trials. The studies must include statistical data to the effectiveness of experimental hypothesis testing of an employment intervention with career-age cancer survivors, or more specifically, evidence of means testing or effect size calculations.

Areas for study eligibility criteria include the presence of:

- (1) condition assignment and measurement (i.e., quasi-experimental and experimental research studies, such as randomized control trials, nonequivalent groups, regression-discontinuity, pattern matching, pretest/posttest),
- (2) unit of assignment (i.e., $N > \text{age}18 < \text{age}65$; individual, cohort, or group; demographics),
- (3) unit of analysis, or group comparability utilized for study differentiation (i.e., treatment group in employment intervention, wait-list, or control),
- (4) attrition (i.e., internal validity issues, such as fidelity, maturation or drop-out),
- (5) fidelity (i.e., implementation).

b. Types of participants

The review is intended to identify effective work interventions that businesses and vocational support organizations working with cancer survivors could implement. The participant sample must include (a) adults ages 18 – 65, (b) active labor force participants (i.e., employed, able to accept employment, or temporally absent or unemployed), (c) cancer survivors (i.e., have a history of a cancer diagnosis, past or present), and (d) beneficiaries of an employment intervention. Studies examining the role of work with cancer survivors during adolescence (< 18 years) or above the traditional retirement age (> 65 years) will be excluded from the review because of variability in child labor laws and confounding aging factors primary to a cancer diagnosis.

c. Types of interventions

The study must address employment interventions or hypothesis testing of employment interventions with cancer survivors that facilitated their participation in the labor force, such as helping a cancer survivor stay in a job, find a new job, or return to work in a new capacity. We anticipate that interventions may fall into three categories, including behavioral, educational, or government agency supports. Further, interventions may include training, psychological support, environmental adjustments or accommodations, flexible or job-sharing work conditions, or job search and placement assistance.

d. Types of outcome measures

Employment is defined as active participation in the labor force, which included employed, able to accept employment if offered, or temporally unemployed or absent from work (International Labour Organization, 2011; Bureau of Labor and Statistics, 2009). More specifically, study participants needed to be actively participating in the labor force or able to take a position if offered with either (a) a recent or short-term diagnosis, or (b) long-term survivor status (i.e., greater than five years [CDC, 2011]). Eligible studies need to provide evidence for the effect of job-related interventions on employment status outcomes, such wages, job skill training, work attendance, job accommodations or support, or job placement.

e. Inclusion/exclusion criteria

Eligible studies may be either published or unpublished investigations of employment interventions with cancer survivors. Studies may be conducted in any country. We will not exclude studies reported in languages other than English, but we will not specifically search for non-English literature. Assistance in reading non-English studies will be obtained as needed. A two-stage process will be used to determine inclusion: (1) title and abstract stage, and (2) full text stage. A full-text of all citations/abstracts advanced from Stage 1 will be retrieved for a final determination for inclusion in the review and analysis.

Studies that use qualitative methods will be excluded from the systematic review. Additionally, any studies that do not evaluate the effectiveness of an employment support intervention with cancer survivors participating in the labor force will be excluded. Casual, interim staff, trainees, trial workshop, sheltered work or non-integrated employment interventions will also be excluded from the review. Studies that exclusively address prevalence rates of employment without including hypothesis testing of an intervention will not be included in this review. If these criteria are not clear from the title or abstract, the study may be advanced for retrieval of a full text to determine eligibility.

II. Search strategy

We will use a keyword search using Internet access to social science and business databases. Sources will include ERIC, Academic Source Complete, Business Source Complete, PsycINFO, ProQuest, Web of Science, Center for International Rehabilitation Research Information and Exchange Database (CIRRIE), and Psychology and Behavioral Sciences Collection. Others may be added. Search strings' keywords will be customized to the particular thesaurus of each database. Keywords will be connected with "and" and "or" when search titles and abstracts. Search terms will also be truncated using EBSCO conventions to include variations in word endings, spellings, and database indices.

We will not impose time series restrictions.

We will also search “gray” literature, research studies that have not been published in peer-reviewed journals such as conference programs and agendas of advocacy nonprofit groups. We may inquire with researchers about any unpublished reports or completed research activity that may be pending report. We also plan to conduct forward searches on article reference lists, and hand search journals’ table of contents and indices in relevant content domains.including

III. Methods of data extraction and synthesis

a. Meta-analysis:

The method of analysis for the systematic review will be meta-analysis, including the review of effect sizes, odds ratios, confidence intervals, cross-sectional correlations, and regression equations. Other data that will be extracted from the studies include publication source, subject characteristics, sample source, employment setting, intervention characteristics, type of employment, work supports, and outcome measurement.

b. Quality assessment:

Two independent reviewers will code studies for methodological quality using the screening form guidelines under Campbell Collaboration study eligibility criteria. In conjunction, reviewers will also extract and track study setting, context, authors, publication data and type.

c. Assessing risk of bias:

Publication bias will be assessed for published vs. unpublished included studies through the visual inspection of a funnel plot and/or moderator analysis.

SOURCES OF SUPPORT

Internal funding:

None

External funding:

The review will be conducted by the SEDL Center on Knowledge Translation for Employment Research (KTER), funded by the National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research (NIDRR) of the U.S. Dept. of Education.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No perceived conflicts of interest exist to conduct the review.

REQUEST SUPPORT

We will not exclude studies reported in languages other than English, but we will not specifically search for non-English literature. Assistance in reading non-English studies will be obtained as needed.

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ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- Content: Kathleen Murphy, Ph. D.

Dr. Murphy is KTER's Research Director. Through collaboration with the Southwest Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Center www.dlrp.org, she also has directed three

studies related to disability and employment. NIDRR funded both awards. Murphy is also involved with a network of researchers at TIRR Memorial Hermann Hospital and M.D. Anderson who are working in the field of cancer and employment and is coPI on a project to survey cancer survivors. She also participates in the National Cancer Legal Services Network.

- Systematic review methods: John Westbrook, Ph. D.

Dr. Westbrook is KTER's PI and Program Manager of SEDL's Disability Research to Practice Program. He has directed several federally funded projects (for example, Regional Rehabilitation Exchange, National Model for Supported Employment and Independent Living, Vocational Rehabilitation Service Models for Individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorders) that are closely linked to the content area of the review. He is also involved in several other systematic reviews, including those registered in the Campbell Collaboration Library.

- Statistical analysis: Minda Markle, M. A.

Ms. Markle defended her dissertation at The University of Texas at Austin, and is a predoctoral intern at the Washington, DC Veterans Administration Medical Center. She was trained in statistical analysis in UT's Educational Psychology graduate department, and is actively researching the role of psychosocial factors and disabilities on daily functioning and rehabilitation. In addition, SEDL has available Comprehensive Meta-analysis software to facilitate any possible statistical calculations; SPSS is also available for analyses.

- Information retrieval: Nancy Reynolds, M.L.S.

Ms. Reynolds is a former library director of the Texas Medical Association Library, and supports research at SEDL in Austin, Texas in her role as Information Associate. She also has access to resources at The University of Texas at Austin.

PRELIMINARY TIMEFRAME

The approximate date for submission of the Draft Protocol is November 1, 2011.

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