

Employment status of cancer survivors improve with multi-component support programmes



Interventions that incorporate information or education training, counselling or coping skills sessions and also physical exercise may be the best way to benefit cancer survivors' employment outcomes

What is the aim of this review?

This Campbell systematic review reports the effects of psychosocial interventions on employment outcomes for cancer survivors. The review summarises findings from 12 studies covering 2,151 cancer survivors.

There is promising evidence that psychosocial interventions may improve employment status for cancer survivors, but don't have an effect on hours of work or sick leave. These interventions range from information sessions and vocational training workshops to counselling and physical therapy.

What is the review about?

Employment is an important stabilizing factor for cancer survivors. A study from 2009 showed that the rate of unemployment among cancer survivors is 34 percent, more than twice that of a comparable healthy population.

This Campbell review estimates the effects of psychosocial interventions for adult cancer survivors. It focuses on interventions to improve employment outcomes such as employment status, return-to-work, absenteeism and time spent on sick leave.

What studies are included?

This review includes 12 studies published between 1980 and 2013 that evaluate the effects of psychosocial interventions on the employment of cancer survivors. Eight of the studies are randomised controlled trials and four are quasi-experimental studies.

Due to the nature of the disease, cancer survivors tend to be older. The majority of studies had participants over the age of 50.

What were the main findings of the review?

What kinds of psychosocial interventions are there?

Interventions include education, training, psychological support, environmental adjustments or accommodations, flexible or job-sharing work conditions, or job search and placement assistance. Most interventions include more than one component to address barriers to employment.



What do the findings in this review mean?

Whilst there are too few studies to provide evidence in support of specific practices, multi-component interventions that incorporate information or education training, counselling or coping skills sessions and also physical exercise may be the best way to benefit cancer survivors' employment outcomes.

Additional research should focus on trials that collect information on employment status and not solely self-reported measures of quality of life. Studies should also describe in more detail an intervention's features and duration.

How up-to-date is this review?

The review authors searched for studies published until 2013. This Campbell Systematic Review was published in August 2016.

What is the Campbell Collaboration?

The Campbell Collaboration is an international, voluntary, non-profit research network that publishes systematic reviews. We summarise and evaluate the quality of evidence about programmes in the social and behavioural sciences. Our aim is to help people make better choices and better policy decisions.

About this summary

This summary was prepared by Chui Hsia Yong (Campbell Collaboration) based on the Campbell Systematic Review 2015:5 'Behavioral, Psychological, Educational and Vocational Interventions to Facilitate Employment Outcomes for Cancer Survivors: A Systematic Review' by Carlton J. Fong, Kathleen Murphy, John D. Westbrook, Minda Markle (DOI: 10.4073/csr.2015.5). Anne Mellbye (RBUP) designed the summary, which was edited by Howard White and produced by Tanya Kristiansen (both from the Campbell Collaboration).