

Identifying employer perceptions of recognised DM practice domains

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In the United States, workers' compensation law is state-specific, and employee benefits including health care costs are born primarily by the employer. In response to cost increases in medical treatment and absences due to illnesses and injuries occupational or non-occupational, the practice of Disability Management (DM) has continued to evolve. The purpose of Disability Management is to reduce the incidents of employee absences, whether due to illness, injury, or other causes. There is a distinct paucity of meaningful analyses of the history and emerging evidences in the DM field. As a more integrated approach to disability management, both a theoretical understanding and an evidence-based practice is sought by each stakeholder in order to structure the evolution of practice and to document consistent ROI metrics. Theoretical underpinnings, historical evolution of disability and absence management, and specific evidence-based trends emerging in the field form the foundation of these standards. This study is a workplace approach that begins to define standards of practice to integrate disability management, health and wellness, and absence management. The purpose of this study is to collect data to comprehend how employers perceive their own awareness, importance, and feelings of preparedness pertaining to the primary practice domains identified in DM. This data will be obtained through an electronic survey using rating scales with an online questionnaire which will include descriptive and ex post facto design components. The survey items were developed by these authors in collaboration with other colleagues known in the field of Disability Management. Descriptive statistics will be computed for the employer participants characteristics based upon the demographic portion of the online questionnaire. The population of interest in this study is national or international employer(s) that have deployed or interested to develop Disability Management program(s) at their worksite(s). The specific type of employees/partners with these employers include: Occupational Health Practitioners, Department Heads and Supervisors, Human Resources personnel and Risk Management/Safety Personnel. The findings from this study will help identify employer perceptions of recognized DM practice domains, identify potential training needs of employers, and assist in developing standards of practice approach to workplace disability, health/wellness, and absence management, and DM educational standards. In addition, employers will be able identify their position on the continuum of the model disability management that evolves to engage practices integrating health and wellness, absence management, and productivity management. Maturation benchmarks will place the employer in a continuous improvement mode towards a workplace with a healthier workforce in a healthier community. Information will also be beneficial to the literature, and capacity development of students and practitioners in the field of Disability Management.