

Title: How can primary care succeed in involving the employer in the rehabilitation of stress-related disorders?

Author and co-authors: [Lisa Björk](#)¹, Kristina Holmgren², Anders Pousette², Monica Bertilsson²

Affiliations: ¹Institute of stress medicine, Västra Götalandsregionen; ²University of Gothenburg, Sweden

Introduction: Sick-leave rates due to common mental disorders (CMD) have been increasing dramatically in Sweden in recent years. Although current evidence of how to enhance return to work in patients with a CMD, including stress-related disorders, is yet inconclusive, many recent reviews point to that involvement of the employer early on in the process might be an efficient way to reduce sick-leave. Through a new function, the rehabilitation coordinator (RC), Swedish primary care has just recently begun to involve the employer in rehabilitation. Yet there is little scientific knowledge about what organizational prerequisites RCs need to succeed in this endeavor. The overall aim of the PRIMA-project is to develop a model for return to work (RTW) for patients with stress-related disorders, which includes the workplace and is well adapted to the Swedish primary care setting. The specific aim of the present study is to investigate the organizational prerequisites for primary health care centers (PHCC) to involve the employer at an early stage of rehabilitation.

Methods

The PRIMA-project is conducted in the Västra Götaland region of Sweden. 22 primary care centers have been randomized to either intervention or control group. The intervention consists of three components: a one-day training for all participant General Practitioners (GPs) and Rehabilitation Coordinators (RC), providing them with both knowledge and practical tools to involve the employer in rehabilitation; a standardized work procedure for GPs and RCs to follow after training; and the possibility to seek clinical advice from expert physicians during intervention. Using a mixed-methods approach, data from organizational registers, logbooks and interviews with managers, GPs and RCs at the participating centers are analyzed to evaluate the process.

Results: We are in the middle of analyzing data, and by the time of the conference we will have preliminary results to present which deepen the knowledge about what primary health care need to involve the employer in the rehabilitation of patients with stress-related disorders.

Discussion and conclusions: This study will hopefully provide policymakers and primary care stakeholders with knowledge about how procedures of cooperation between GPs and RCs can be organized to facilitate employer involvement and reduce time to RTW among patients suffering from work related stress.