Unity in diversity: employer experiences and needs regarding workers with cancer across 9 countries

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**Background**

In this study we answered the questions what do employers across different countries 1) experience as good practice regarding workers diagnosed with cancer and 2) need in relation to this?

**Methods**

Twenty-five semi-structured interviews were held in eight European countries and Israel with 2-3 employers (HR-manager, supervisor) from (non-)profit organisations varying regarding size and sector per country. Interviews were mostly recorded and transcribed verbatim. A grounded theory/thematic analysis approach including three peer reviewing sessions and individual checks across countries was used to analyse.

**Results**

Results showed that overall, employers experienced having a worker with cancer as a complex process. Shaped by worker, employer and country characteristics, the process of good practice included: 1) disclosure as prerequisite; 2) supervisor collects information on the situation; 3) decision-making on initial actions; 4) keeping in touch; 5) decision-making on return-to-work; 6) dealing with the next phase. Employers expressed the following needs: 1) structured procedures; 2) collaboration with other stakeholders, particularly occupational health professionals; 3) communication skills training; 4) information on cancer and 5) financial resources.

**Conclusions**

Notwithstanding country differences – which need to be studied in more detail in future studies - these employers shared the experience that assisting workers with cancer is complex and that they would profit from structured procedures, collaboration, ‘soft skills’ (communication and leadership), information and financial support.

**Key messages:**

- Employers in 9 countries experience assisting workers with cancer as complex.
- Employers need structured procedures, collaboration, communication and leadership skills, information and financial support to assist workers with cancer.