

CORE SET DEVELOPMENT FOR VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION USING THE ICF

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Introduction

Vocational rehabilitation plays a key role in bringing workers who are off work back to work, while encouraging employment participation. The consequences of accidents, injuries, and health conditions that prevent workers from engaging in employment are a prevailing issue in the area of disability management but there is no universal description of functioning for patients who participate in vocational rehabilitation. Our objective is to develop a Core Set based on the International Classification of Functioning, Disability, and Health (ICF)¹ which would help clinicians, researchers, insurers, policymakers, employers, and other stakeholders with successful work reintegration and disability management. The ICF is a universal framework and classification system to describe functioning which was approved by the World Health Organization in 2001. An ICF Core Set refers to a short list of ICF categories (out of the total 1454 categories) that are considered to be relevant to a specific health condition or health-related event. ICF Core Sets are developed for the purpose of making the ICF practical and useable in the clinical, practice, and/or research settings.

Methods

The development process consists of three phases. The first phase is the *preparatory phase* which consists of four separate and parallel studies: (1) systematic review of the literature, (2) worldwide survey of experts, (3) cross-sectional study, and (4) focus group interview. Patients with various health conditions were recruited from five vocational rehabilitation centers located in Switzerland and Germany to participate in the cross-sectional and focus group studies. The second phase is a *consensus conference* where results from the preparatory phase will be presented followed by a multi-stage nominal voting of categories that are to be included in the ICF Core Set for Vocational Rehabilitation. The *consensus conference* will be attended by world experts in the field of vocational rehabilitation with different professional and practice backgrounds. The final phase includes the testing and validation of the Core Set in various healthcare settings, types of jobs, and health conditions.

Expected results

The Core Set will be drafted during the ICF Core Set Consensus Conference in May 2010.

Current status of the project

Data on outcome measures in vocational rehabilitation are currently being extracted from full text articles (N = 339). Survey of experts (n=201) selected by stratified sampling (WHO region x health profession) has been completed and the analysis of ~5000 responses from the experts are ongoing. Eighty-one individual interviews with patients participating in vocational rehabilitation have been conducted and more are scheduled, while 7 out of the estimated 8 focus groups

(depending on the saturation of responses) have already been completed. Analyses of the individual and focus group interviews are also ongoing.

Implication to disability management

A universal Core Set to describe functioning of individuals who participate in vocational rehabilitation programs is essential in the clinical evaluation and assessment so appropriate care and management strategies may be implemented. Such a Core Set based on the ICF could serve as a unifying metric or language to efficiently deliver and evaluate optimum vocational rehabilitation. We believe that the use of the Core Set will benefit all stakeholders in work disability management including the workers, insurers, policymakers, and employers.

Additional information

This project is a collaboration between 1) the ICF Research Branch at Swiss Paraplegic Research, Nottwil, Switzerland, 2) ICF Research Branch at the Institute for Health and Rehabilitation Sciences, LMU Munich, Germany, 3) Classification, Terminology and Standards (CTS) of the World Health Organization (WHO), and 4) Rehabilitation Clinic Bellikon, Switzerland. The project is funded by the Swiss Accident Insurance- Schweizer Unfallversicherungsanstalt (SUVA). Other project partners include the International Labour Organization (ILO), the World Confederation for Physical Therapy (WCPT), the World Federation of Occupational Therapists (WFOT), and the International Society of Physical and Rehabilitation Medicine (ISPRM).

Key Words: Vocational rehabilitation, Employment, Classification

1. World Health Organization. International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health: ICF. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2001