
Preface

This handbook addresses the problem of work disability. Work is central in people's lives and is one of the most powerful social determinants of health, as acknowledged by the WHO. Overwhelming evidence shows that work is generally good for health. Conversely, work disability has become a worldwide major public health problem. In the past, practitioners, policymakers, and researchers considered work disability to be primarily a socioeconomic and political problem, having biomedical causes or alleged biomedical causes rather than a public health one. For this reason, little attention was paid to work disability for many years in the general medical and public health literature. Only recently, the insight has grown and convincing evidence has been amassed that indicate that long-term work disability contributes to 2–3 times increased risk of poor general health, 2–3 times increased risk of mental health problems, and 20% excess mortality [1,2]. Work disability is a considerable burden to workers, workplaces, and society. It impacts workers' health and well-being, workplace productivity, and the social security safety net of a country.

In this handbook, we define work disability as occurring when a worker is unable to stay at work or return to work because of an injury or disease. Work disability is the result of a decision by a worker who for potential physical, psychological, social, administrative, or cultural reasons does not return to work. While the worker may want to return to work, he or she feels incapable of returning to normal working life. Therefore, after the triggering accident or disease has activated a work absence, various determinants can influence some workers to remain temporarily out of the workplace, while others return, and others may finally not return to work at all.

Key practitioners and researchers of lower back pain were promoting work disability as a topic of interest to the health-care field some 30 years ago. Alf Nachemson, a Swedish orthopedic surgeon, wrote a “revolutionary” paper in an orthopedic journal entitled *Work for All, for Those with Low Back Pain as Well* reminding orthopedic surgeons of the functional side of their work and the fact that treating back pain should not put patients at risk of losing their job but rather help them to return to a productive working life [3]. In fact, the goal of work disability prevention and management is not to fix a disorder or take care of an illness. It is identifying and effectively addressing

the determinants of work disability at the personal (physical and psychological), workplace, and societal levels through evidence-based interventions. Work disability prevention also involves devising appropriate evidence-based interventions to address the determinants related to the work disability situation. Therefore, interventions in this field should address not only the worker but also the stakeholders and systems, as all have responsibility for and contribute to the work disability situation. Recent studies demonstrate that these determinants look remarkably similar among a wide variety of disorders. This perspective explains the way we have developed and organized the chapters not around the various disorders that may be associated with work disability but to directly address the work disability problem as a central issue independent from condition. Only Chapters 16–19 discuss specific points pertaining to the disorder leading to work disability.

The editorial team (Patrick Loisel, Johannes R. Anema, Michael Feuerstein, Glenn Pransky, Ellen MacEachen, and Katia M. Costa-Black) includes researchers from surgery, occupational to medicine, psychology, sociology, and physiotherapy who worked together and are dedicated to advancing the field of work disability prevention (WDP). All chapters are authored or coauthored by well-recognized researchers and leaders in work disability from diverse disciplines and several countries. In our view, this transdisciplinary team approach provides a united vision across the diversity of disciplines and countries. We expect that this handbook will be a valuable resource for practitioners to prevent and manage work disability of their patients. Administrators, researchers, and students will find state-of-the-art information on essential knowledge for improving their understanding of the complex WDP field. Considerable work has been done in this field over the last 30 years; however, this knowledge is dispersed across diverse journal articles and books that tend to be topic specific and not focused specifically to the WDP field. This handbook assembles in one place the most recent, transdisciplinary, and relevant information on work disability prevention and management to date. Throughout the handbook, care has been taken to avoid needless repetition, and many cross-references between chapters are provided. These cross-references are intended to reinforce the interrelatedness of work disability elements across the individual, workplace, and societal levels, thereby helping readers to complement their understanding of the diverse elements in the work disability field.

As a trailblazer in the field, and a coauthor of chapters in this book Michael Feuerstein has graciously contributed the Foreword, placing the handbook in context of the evolution of this field. Drawing on clinical and research experience, his vision led to the development of early conceptual frameworks and, more than 20 years ago, to the creation of *Journal of Occupational Rehabilitation*, which is now the leading journal in the work disability field. Following the Foreword, the book is divided into 6 parts: Part I discusses *The Burden of Work Disability*, Part II presents *Unraveling Work Disability Prevention*, Part III considers *Work Disability Determinants and Diagnosis*, Part IV discusses the *Effective Work Disability Prevention Interventions*, Part V discusses *Work Disability Issues on Specific Disorders* and Part VI presents *The Challenge of Implementing Evidence* in this field.

We thank the numerous authors who have joined this endeavor, providing the reader with the most comprehensive and timely evidence on work disability prevention available today. These authors have dedicated much of their time and scientific skills to bring the best of present knowledge in the specific topic they have addressed to make this truly the first authoritative evidence-based handbook in “Work Disability: Prevention and Management.”

Part I (Chapters 1 to 5): The Burden of Work Disability

In Chapter 1, *Sickness Absence and Disability: An International Perspective*, Rienk Prins describes the societal burden of work disability in relation to persons affected and triggering illnesses, using an epidemiologic and international perspective. In Chapter 2, *The Work-Disabled Patient*, Marie France Coutu, Daniel Côté, and Raymond Baril consider the situation of the work-disabled worker from anthropological, psychological, health, and clinical perspectives. In Chapter 3, Marc Koopmanschap, Alex Burdorf, and Freek Lötters tackle the problem of *Work Absenteeism and Productivity Loss at Work* (or presenteeism), discussing related policy questions. Chapter 5 authored by Patrick Loisel and Pierre Côté presents *The Work Disability Paradigm: Revealing Its Public Health Implications*, discussing the societal causes of work disability and arguing for a public health approach to the problem.

Part II (Chapters 6 to 9): Unraveling Work Disability Prevention

Chapter 6, *Work Disability Models: Past and Present*, authored by Katia M. Costa-Black, Patrick Loisel, and Michael Feuerstein, presents a historical perspective of the conceptual models and discusses their rationale in this new work disability field. In Chapter 7, *Measurement of Outcomes in Work Disability Prevention*, Glenn Pransky presents *Conceptual and Methodological Considerations and Recommendations for Measuring Outcomes*, drawing on various perspectives. Chapter 8 on *Pain, Chronicity, and Disability* by Michael Sullivan, Marc-Olivier Martel, and Zina Trost, approaches the role of chronic pain in prolonged work disability with related treatment implications. Chapter 9, dedicated to *Methodological Issues in Work Disability Prevention Research*, authored by Sheila Hogg-Johnson and Ellen MacEachen, discusses the various methodological approaches and challenges that can advance our understanding of work disability research, incorporating perspectives from the workplace and other stakeholders, and related ethical issues.

Parts III and IV (Chapters 10 to 19): Work Disability Determinants and Diagnosis: Work Disability Issues on Specific Disorders

Ûte Bultmann and Sandra Brouwer in Chapter 10, *Individual-Level Psychosocial Factors and Work Disability Prevention*, provides an overview of these factors, and link them to theoretical models in work disability prevention. In Chapter 11, *Workplace Issues*, William Shaw, Vicki Kristman, and Nicole Vézina summarize the evidence for specific workplace issues as significant factors in work disability. Katherine Lippel and Freek Lötters provide a comparison of cause-based and disability-based income support systems in Chapter 12, *Public Insurance Systems*. In Chapter 13, Carel Hulshof and Glenn Pransky address *The Role and Influence of Care Providers on*

Work Disability and argue that work disability is still a blind spot for many practitioners and that occupational health care should be integrated into mainstream health care. In Chapter 14, *Understanding Work Disability Systems and Intervening Upstream*, Ellen MacEachen discusses the real impact of key policies at a government level and their relation to work disability outcomes. Marie José Durand and Quan Nha Hong, Chapter 15, offer *Tools for Assessing Work Disability*, an overview of work disability assessment tools and criteria for instrument choice. Part IV is dedicated to issues related to the specific disorder having induced the work disability process. It is divided into four parts, each dedicated to a specific disorder. In Chapter 16, *Predicting Return to Work for Workers with Low-Back Pain*, Ivan Steenstra, Jason Busse, and Sheila Hogg-Johnson report on factors that best predict disability outcomes for workers with LBP evaluated early in the course of work disability. In Chapter 17, *Mental Health Problems and Mental Disorders*, Marc Corbière, Alessia Negrini, and Carolyn Dewa discuss the determinants of work participation and work functioning for these disorders. Chapter 18, *Cancer Survivorship and Work*, authored by Courtney Collins, Alicia Ottati, and Michael Feuerstein, discusses the epidemiology of cancer survivorship and work and the long-term effects of cancer and treatment exposures on work. Chapter 19 on *Traumatic Brain Injury*, Carol Cancelliere, David Cassidy, and Angela Colantonio discusses novel rehabilitation programs and assistive technologies that may improve employment outcomes in this work-disabled population.

Part V (Chapters 20 to 25): Effective Work Disability Prevention Interventions

Chapter 20, *Clinical Interventions to Reduce Work Disability in Workers with Musculoskeletal Disorders or Mental Health Problems*, authored by Bart Staal, Angelique de Rijk, Inge Houkes, and Martijn Heymans, presents a research synthesis of effective interventions aimed at reducing work disability in these populations. Sandra van Oostrom and Cécile Boot discuss in Chapter 21, *Workplace Interventions*, the effectiveness of workplace interventions implemented to facilitate return to work and challenges in their implementation. In Chapter 22, *Sickness and Disability Policy Interventions*, Johannes R. Anema, Christopher Prinz, and Rienk Prins compare the effect of policy measures on work disability reduction through three examples in different international contexts. Chapter 23, *Cost-Effectiveness of Interventions for Prevention of Work Disability*, authored by Kimi Ueguaki, Allard van den Beek, Emile Tompa, and Maurits W. van Tulder provides an overview of the evaluative methods to determine the cost-effectiveness of interventions to prevent work disability and presents examples of economic evaluations. In Chapter 24, *Informing the Public: Preventing Work Disability and Fostering Behavioral Changes at the Societal Level*, Douglas Gross, Sameer Deshpande, Maxi Miciak, Erik Werner, Michiel Reneman, and Rachele Buchbinder demonstrate the potential impact of mass media campaigns on work disability reduction and discuss future possible strategies. In Chapter 25, *Return to Work Stakeholders' Perspectives on Work Disability*,

Amanda Young considers the various stakeholders' motivations, interests, and concerns in relation to work disability and return to work.

Part VI (Chapters 26 to 28): The Challenge of Implementing Evidence

In Chapter 26, *Extracting the Core Elements of Interventions*, Katia M. Costa-Black uses a literature synthesis to extract the essentials of evidence-based interventions for implementation in other settings. Jean Baptiste Fassier presents in Chapter 27, *Obstacles and Facilitators in Implementation of Return to Work Interventions*, which considers necessary conditions for innovative and effective interventions in a different sociopolitical context. Chapter 28, *Building an International Educational Network in Work Disability Prevention*, authored by Patrick Loisel, describes a Canadian-based educational program, with international participation, to train researchers and trainers in work disability prevention.

Finally, in an Appendix, *Work Disability Theories: A Taxonomy for Researchers*, Angélique de Rijk describes and classifies the multiple theories that have been published related to work disability prevention. This Appendix may help the reader-researcher in this field to identify appropriate theories as possible foundations for their projects.

In editing this handbook, we have attempted to provide a comprehensive vision of this relatively young field of work disability. We expect that many readers from diverse disciplines, perspectives, professions, and countries will find this book useful and helpful in their professional life. We would be delighted if the information in this book provides a framework for future efforts to significantly decrease the global burden of work disability.

We thank the numerous authors who have joined this endeavor, providing the reader with the most comprehensive and timely evidence on work disability prevention available today. These authors have dedicated much of their time and scientific skills to bring the best of present knowledge in the specific topic they have addressed to make this truly the first authoritative evidence-based *Handbook in Work Disability: Prevention and Management*.

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