

Return-to-work after spinal cord injury: the development and evaluation of ReWork-SCI

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INTRODUCTION

The overall aim of the project was to explore and generate knowledge about RTW for adults with SCI, to develop and evaluate the design and feasibility of a complex intervention that can serve as a complement to current RTW systems.

METHODS

The development of ReWork-SCI draws on the Medical Research Council guidelines for developing and evaluating complex interventions. The project builds on five consecutive studies and a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods. The generation of knowledge for ReWork-SCI consisted of individual interviews and photovoice discussions with persons who were unemployed, on sick leave after SCI, or in employment after SCI (n=21) and focus group interviews with professional stakeholders involved in the RTW process (n=36). ReWork-SCI includes four phases and 15 steps guided by a coordinator based in the SCI rehabilitation team in health care. The feasibility of ReWork-SCI was evaluated within a clinical rehabilitation setting regarding adherence, acceptability, recruitment, retention, and selected outcome measures.

RESULTS

Overall, ReWork-SCI was feasible. Core features of ReWork-SCI were that the design builds on a systematic structure, the use of a person-centred approach, and the individualized dialogue with the employer supported by a coordinator. ReWork-SCI could contribute to a plan for RTW, facilitate decision-making, and build trust in the RTW-process.

CONCLUSION

ReWork-SCI was feasible, although further modelling and modification are needed for ReWork-SCI to be applicable in a clinical context and sufficiently person-centred. After modifications, the effect of ReWork-SCI is relevant to evaluate in a full-scale trial.