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Factors associated with return to work among cancer survivors: A systematic review

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Abstract

Objectives: The purpose of this study was to review the literature on factors associated with return to work among cancer survivors. Based on the findings, a conceptual framework was designed to address the interaction between various factors associated with return to work upon cancer diagnosis.

Methods: Databases Medline, EMBASE, ProQuest, PubMed and ScienceDirect were systematically searched for articles published between1990-2010. Both qualitative and quantitative article that described cancer patients' self-reported data or patients' point of view on factors associated with return to work or employment status following cancer diagnosis were included.

Result: Fifteen articles which consisted of five qualitative articles and ten quantitative articles met the inclusion criteria. Breast cancer was the most studied type of cancer as five articles (33.3%) exclusively focused on breast cancer. Colorectal cancer was studied independently in two articles (13.3%) while eight articles (53.3%) included cancer of various types. A conceptual framework on return to work was designed based on the ten factors identified: personal related factors, work related factors, disease related factors, treatment related factors, health status, self-perceived work ability, private health insurance, advice from health professionals, support from family and friends as well as perception and priority towards work.

Conclusion: Improved cancer survivor rate warrants focus on various issues cancer survivors may encounter following their return to work. Conceptual framework revealed interaction between various factors associated with return to work upon cancer diagnosis which is helpful in recognizing the potential areas for intervention to help cancer survivors reintegrate back to workplace.

Biography

Dr. Chow Sze Loon, MPH, CMIA, MBBS is a public service department's scholar currently pursuing his Doctor of Public Health, Dr PH in University of Malaya. He has special interest in occupational medicine and health promotion at the workplace. He is running an Occupational Medicine Clinic twice a week in University of Malaya Medical Centre, diagnosing occupational hazards. Dr. Chow is also a Certified Medical Impairment Assessor (CMIA) by National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) which allows him to assess patients' impairment as a member of the medical board.