

THE PSYCHOLOGICAL DETERMINANTS OF JOB RETENTION IN MS

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Background People with multiple sclerosis stop working earlier than expected due to disease progression, individuals giving up work voluntarily or due to employers' advice or requirement. Although effective symptom management, social support and psychological factors can influence job retention, the relationship between job retention and psychological factors remains unclear. Exploring this may lead to psychological interventions to aid job retention.

Methods In phase 1 we held three focus groups with people with MS in paid employment discussing work-related experiences and concerns to elicit key psychological constructs. In phase 2 participants will complete validated questionnaires to measure the identified psychological factors, work instability and the impact of MS at four time points over 30 months.

Results 20 employed people with MS participated in 3 focus groups. The key themes identified were disclosure, self-management/coping, work environment and illness-related. A questionnaire pack was developed to include the identified themes. 221 employed people with MS have been recruited to phase 2 of the study and 213/221 (96.4%) completed the baseline questionnaire. 91% have relapsing-remitting MS.

Discussion We have identified the main themes which impact on employment for people with MS. We will explore the impact of these on job retention in the longitudinal study.