A National Work Ability Index - Network supporting Occupational Health in Germany

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The “problem”

Imagine…
there is a useful instrument for promoting Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) and no one is using it…
The “problem”

or:

“How to increase the use of the Work Ability Index (WAI) within OSH in Germany?”
Content of presentation

1. What is the WAI?
2. The WAI Network
3. Does it work?

from OHP perspective
1. What is the WAI?

Work Ability Index (WAI)

- questionnaire instrument for assessing Work Ability
- aim to improve WA
- in OH useful
  - as check list
  - for benchmarking
  - for epidemiological investigation
- used by OH physicians, OH nurses
- *(WAI has strengths and limitations)*
1. What is the WAI?

The WAI instrument covers with ten questions seven components:

1: work ability vs. best ever
2: work ability vs demands
3: number of diagnosed diseases
4: work impairment due to diseases
5: sickness absence last 12 months
6: estimation of future work ability (2 years)
7: mental resources
2. The WAI Network

Overall aim:

*promotion of the use of the WAI in Germany*

by establishing…

a) national WAI User Network

b) national WAI Database

c) WAI User Program

d) International cooperation
a) WAI User Network

- About 50 members (increasing), many OHP
- Meetings, newsletter, home page
- Support by
  - Information (internet, flyers, information sheets, practical examples)
  - Mutual exchange
  - Reference scores
  - WAI User Program
b) WAI Data base

WAI – Reference Scores for Nurses (n=2793)

(source: German WAI network, Hasselhorn & Müller, 2004)
b) WAI Data base

WAI means of Albert Hospital (n=123)

WAI – Reference Scores for Nurses (n=2793)

(source: German WAI network, Hasselhorn & Müller, 2004)
c) WAI User Program

WAI Server Wuppertal

- WAI user programme (free download)
- national WAI data base
- national WAI reference values

WAI user (e.g. Occup. Health Physician)

- data export (SPSS/Excel)
- comparative presentation of results (group means by age aso)

- WAI user programme
  - data entry
  - data analysis

via ftp (anonymously)
3. does it work?

*Indicators for “success”*

+ Interest: rather high, esp. large companies
- Interest could be better among indiv. OHP
+ Parts of Union fight the instrument
+ Initiation of critical review of the WAI instrument
+ methodological questions solved
+ perspective = positive

*Costs*

+ 1 person year and IT
- sustainability needs to be assured
Conclusion

The establishment of a User Network in OS & H can be a useful instrument to promote a certain topic, especially when a topic
a) is emerging and
b) is promising.
Thank you!

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