Delphi study to determine factors to be considered when attributing mental disorders to work

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ABSTRACT

Background: There is an uncertainty about the factors that ought to be taken into account when making attribution of mental disorders to work.

Aims and objectives: The aim was to establish a consensus on the factors that should be considered in the assessment of occupational attribution for mental disorders. Other objectives include a formulation of a case definition for occupational mental disorders and a determination of a threshold for its work-relatedness.

Methods: A three-round Delphi survey was conducted with experts in the field of occupational mental disorders. They were invited to provide opinions on a mixture of open and close-structured questions about the process and factors that should be considered.

Results: Participation comprised of 34 experts in the first round, 28 experts in the second round and 24 experts in the final round. A consensus was reached on 12 workplace stressors and one personal factor (previous history of mental illness) that should be taken into consideration. Six other personal factors were identified as being important. A consensus was reached for a case definition of occupational mental disorders. There was no consensus on a threshold for work-relatedness.

Conclusions: Both workplace and personal stressors should be considered when attributing mental disorders to work. There was more consensus for workplace stressors than personal factors. There was a general support for the definition of occupational mental disorders.