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Press Release: MS Employment Guide launched to support healthcare professionals

Brussels/ London - A new guide has been launched to help healthcare professionals (HCPs) talk about the benefits of work when consulting people diagnosed with multiple sclerosis.

The Guide, produced by the European Multiple Sclerosis Platform (EMSP) and The Work Foundation of Lancaster University, advises neurologists and other clinicians on how to convey the positive effects of work to MS patients.

This document draws on the expertise and direct experience of specialists and patient advocates. The Guide is endorsed by the European Committee for Treatment and Research in MS (ECTRIMS) and by Rehabilitation in MS (RiMS).

'Much more than work'

EMSP's Project Coordinator Emma Rogan highlights that out of the 700,000 people living with MS in Europe as many as 7 in 10 have been diagnosed during their prime working years, and adds that between 60 and 80 percent lose their jobs within 15 years of the onset of the disease.

"As hundreds of thousands of people living with MS know, there is so much more to 'work' than just working", Emma Rogan said.

"Having a job is rehabilitative, brings social connectivity and enhances financial independence.

The Guide comes along to harness this potential by encouraging HCPs to discuss employment during their meetings with patients."

Changing the perspective on disability

There are several broad topics that can feature in conversations between HCPs and their patients, explains *Fit for Work Global Alliance's* Executive Director, Antonella Cardone:

"We recommend neurologists and other health care professionals to consider early and effective intervention, recovery goals, symptom management at work and return to work policies among the main areas of work-related conversations."

This publication - says Guide co-author Karen Steadman - has the potential to help stakeholders and the general public change the way they regard disability:

"By supporting constructive, positive conversations about work between patients and HCPs, we can shift the focus from what people with disabilities cannot do, to what they can do."

MS and work

Research has found that the MS symptoms most contributing to loss of employment are - in order of their impact - fatigue, restricted mobility and cognitive issues.

In turn, work can alleviate the risk of developing additional mental health problems such as depression. The so-called co-morbidity is 2 to 3 times higher for people with MS than for the general population.

Ready for Work

The Guide is entitled “*Why and how should healthcare professionals talk to people with MS about work*”.

It is part of the *Ready for Work* project carried out jointly by EMSP and The Work Foundation.

Find more information at <http://www.emsp.org/projects/ready-for-work/>.

What is MS?

Multiple sclerosis is one of the most common long-term conditions affecting the central nervous system (brain and spinal cord) and the main cause of non-traumatic disability in young adults.

MS is a neurodegenerative disease, a group of conditions that includes Parkinson’s and Alzheimer’s. To date it has no cure.

Who is EMSP?

An umbrella organisation for 40 patient organisations across Europe. It is firmly committed to its ultimate vision of a world without multiple sclerosis.

EMSP works to ensure that people with MS have a real voice in determining their own objectives and priorities.

Find more at www.emsp.org.

Who is The Work Foundation?

A leading provider of analysis, evaluation, policy advice and know-how in the UK and beyond.

The Work Foundation addresses the fundamental question of what *good work* means: this is a complex and evolving concept.

Find more at www.theworkfoundation.com.

Contact

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