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Revitalising injured workers via certification



Rehabilitation programmes such as by Socso have contributed to an average of more than 65 percent of injured workers returning to employment.

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THE International Labour Organisation estimated that globally, 2.3 million workers succumbed to occupational accidents and work-related diseases every year.

In developing countries including Malaysia, this has emerged as a growing

concern arising from the increasing number of work-related accidents which could result in deaths, injuries and major disabilities, sick leave, inability to work, temporary or permanent loss of jobs.

Studies have shown that early intervention, appropriate rehabilitation and medical care as well as having supportive family members can help reduce the negative consequences of work-related injuries.

This will in turn increase the likelihood of returning an injured worker to work hence reducing the number of days of absence from work.

The length of work absence has been found to be positively associated with higher costs to the employer and negatively related to the likelihood of the employees successful return to employment.

Employment injuries and work related illnesses are under the jurisdiction of the Social Security Organisation, or Socso.

Based on the cases of injuries reported to Socso, the total number of accident cases increased from 61,552 in 2012 to 72,631 last year .

Many disability and vocational rehabilitation programmes have been introduced to help restore injured workers to their former productive life.

Socso implemented such a programme called the Return-to-Work (RTW) since 2007 which adopts a case management strategy whereby every injured worker is assigned a case manager who will facilitate the intervention using a bio-psychosocial and multidisciplinary approach.

RTW is a concept encompassing all initiatives intended to facilitate the workplace reintegration of persons who experience a reduction in work capability.

To provide quality services to its members, SOCSO's RTW case managers and employees dealing with RTW programme-related matters, including work placement officers and those working in Socso's Rehabilitation Centre are required to have professional certification in disability management practice, administered by the National Institute of Disability Management and Research (NIDMAR), British Columbia, Canada since 2010.

NIDMAR serves as the Secretariat to the International Disability Management Standards Council (IDMSC).

Socso is a member of IDMSC with 26 countries, including Australia, Belgium, Canada and Germany.

Through IDMSC, two professional certifications are administered globally namely the Certified Disability

Management Professional (CDMP) and the Certified Return to Work Coordinator (CRTWC).

The CDMP and CRTWC designations are also referenced in the global Return to Work Best Practice guidelines developed, validated and published by the International Social Security Association (ISSA), a UN affiliated agency located in Geneva.

In November 2016, Socso signed a licence agreement with NIDMAR which allows Socso to offer training under its 'Return to Work' programme, using the NIDMAR curriculum and the CDMP and CRTWC designations of IDMSC.

Following the signing of the licence agreement, in December 2016, Socso appointed the Social Wellbeing Research Centre (SWRC), University of Malaya, as the Test Agency to manage and administer the CDMP and CRTWC examinations.

The SWRC has been working closely with SOCSO in adapting and updating the NIDMAR training programme consisting of 25 modules according to the

Malaysian context.

The 25 modules were developed based on the Occupational Standards nine domain areas identified as core skills and competencies for effective Disability Management practice.

Each of the 25 modules and all course documentation were also translated from English into Bahasa Malaysia.

To ensure that the content is relevant to the Malaysian context, Socso established a committee which consists of representatives from various government ministries and agencies, including Human Resources Ministry, Department of Skills Development, Department of Safety and Health, Department of Social Welfare, Department of Industrial Relations and Industrial Court of Malaysia.

A year later in 2017, for the first time the CDMP examination was offered in English and Bahasa Malaysia to Socso employees and subsequently in 2018.

This year, the CDMP and CRTWC examinations are opened to all.

Intensive training will be provided prior to the examination.

The certificates awarded to the participants who pass the examinations are signed by the Chair and three Co-Chairs of the Certification Council of IDMSC.

Eligibility qualifications for the CDMP and CRTWC include at least a diploma in health-related fields.

Such initiative made Malaysia the only country in Asean to offer such training and one of the two in Asia, of which the other country is Hong Kong.

The aim is to open this programme to countries in the region.

Hopefully, many Malaysians will sign up for the programme with the Employment Services Department of Socso.

A study by SWRC using cost-benefit analysis showed that the benefits of the RTW programme implemented by Socso outweigh the costs involved.

The structured intervention case management approach with professionally certified staff have to a large extent contributed to the success of this programme with an average of more than 65 per cent of injured workers returning to employment.

The impact on the nation's economy is obvious but more importantly is the impact on the individuals who are now able to get back into employment.

They are now able to earn and become an active member of society which contributes to their self-worth and dignity.

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