

The role of a Disability Case Manager in return-to-work: experiences from patients, healthcare professionals and employers.

*D. S. Vonck, E. Lemmens, N. Nijs, D. S. Decuman, K. van Kelst, M. Michielsen, D. M. Vander Plaetse, P. D. A. Spooren*

## **Background**

Returning to work for patients with an acquired brain injury after an intensive rehabilitation period is often an enormous challenge. It is shown that chances of reintegration decrease with 50 % after 4 to 6 months, and decrease further to 20 % after one year<sup>1</sup>. In Jessa Hospital, an early interdisciplinary intervention program (Weer-Werk) is started with the involvement of a Disability Case Manager (DCM). The DCM facilitates the patient's return to work on several aspects, and acts as a tailored contact person for the patient, its family, the healthcare professionals, the employers and other potential stakeholders. This study aims to map all the personal experiences from different stakeholders around the involvement of a DCM in the reintegration process.

## **Methods**

For this study, we performed semi-structured interviews in three groups of stakeholders: (1) patients; (2) healthcare professionals from the interdisciplinary intervention program (Weer-Werk); (3) external stakeholders, which included employers, social insurance physicians or occupational physicians, all involved with the reintegration process of 1 or more patients. Questions prompted participants to describe their experiences concerning the involvement of a DCM in the reintegration process. Interviews transcribed verbatim and analyzed with descriptive phenomenology using NVIVO 12.

## **Results**

For now, we included 24 patients in group 1, 7 healthcare professionals in group 2 and 7 external stakeholders in group 3. The semi-structured interviews in group 1 are finished, but for group 2 and 3 more semi-structured interviews will be added in January/February 2020. A preliminary analysis of group 1 showed already a predominantly positive tendency towards the involvement of a DCM in the reintegration process.

## **Conclusions**

An overview of the most relevant experiences in the three different groups, with corresponding conclusions, are expected the first half year of 2020.