Results of a feasibility study: barriers and facilitators in implementing the Sherbrooke model in France.

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OBJECTIVES: Return-to-work interventions associated with the workplace environment are often more effective than conventional care. The Sherbrooke model is an integrated intervention that has proved successful in preventing work disability due to low-back pain. Implementation, however, runs up against many obstacles, and failure has been reported in many countries. The present study sought to identify barriers to and facilitators of the implementation of the Sherbrooke model within the French health system.

METHODS: A multiple case study with nested levels of analysis was performed in two regions of France. A conceptual framework was designed and refined to identify barriers and facilitators at the individual, organizational and contextual levels. Qualitative data were collected via semi-structured interview (N=22), focus groups (N=7), and observation and from the gray literature. Participants (N=61) belonged to three fields: healthcare, social insurance, and the workplace.

RESULTS: Numerous barriers and facilitators were identified in each field and at each level, some specific and others common to workers in all fields. Individual and organizational barriers comprised lack of time and resources, discordant professional values, and perceived risk. Legal barriers comprised medical confidentiality, legal complexity, and priority given to primary prevention. Individual-level facilitators comprised needs and perceived benefits. Some organizations had concordant values and practices. Legal facilitators comprised possibilities of collaboration and gradual return to work.

CONCLUSION: The present feasibility analysis of implementing the Sherbrooke model revealed numerous barriers and facilitators suggesting a new implementation strategy be drawn up if failure is to be avoided.
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