

Abstract on the content of the workshop on sickness absence, EUPHA, 2001.

Physician's sickness certification practice

To issue sickness certificates and to discuss with a patient whether sickness absence is appropriate or not is part of the job for most physicians in European countries. That is, to discuss and assess level of work ability, discuss pros and cons with sickness absence (or disability pension) with the patient, to make a decision regarding this and if yes to decide on full- or part time absence, as well as duration of the absence, and finally to issue the certificate.

Although sickness absence and disability pension have immense consequences for the individual, employer, and society there is very little scientific knowledge on the practice of sickness certification. What factors influence this practice in different specialties, countries, for different patients, and diseases?

In this workshop both methodological and theoretical aspects of research in this area, as well as actual results of studies will be focused on. What research has been performed? Which research questions have been focused? Which methods have been used? Which aspects have not been studied?

The aim of this workshop is to elucidate the current knowledge base on the praxis of sickness-absence certification and to discuss future needs of research.

Chairman: M.D. PhD Sören Brage, Oslo, Norway

Presentations

1. Communication about health and work-related topics in Western-European general practice. Dr Atie van den Brink-Muinen, Utrecht, Netherlands.
2. Impact of the General Practitioner as a person on sick-listing in Primary Health Care. MD, PhD-student. Gunilla Norrmén, Örebro, Sweden.
3. Epidemiology of general practice sickness certification. Fiona Ford, IASO, Liverpool, Great Britain
4. Physician's sickness certification practice - a literature review. MSS, MPH. PhD-Student. Elsy Söderberg, Linköping, Sweden

Discussion

1. What is the state of the current knowledge base? In which areas is more knowledge warranted?
2. Which methods have been most useful? Which could be developed?
3. Is it possible to develop validated instruments in this area?
4. Which areas are most urgent to focus on?
5. What theories could be useful in this research?