To Disclose or Not to Disclose? Supporting Job-Seekers and Employees

At-a-Glance:
Researchers analyzed the decisions made by people with multiple sclerosis to disclose or not to disclose their disability to an employer and explored what considerations went into the decision-making process. Participants in this qualitative study had three things in common: they were all at least 18 years old, all spoke English, and all worked after their disability diagnosis. Researchers engaged with participants through eight focus groups in South Carolina, Georgia, and Ohio to learn the many obstacles and concerns around disability disclosure.

Key Findings
- Many participants disclosed their diagnosis to explain, prepare, or educate their employers or colleagues.
- Some had no concerns or fear of the disclosure to their employers.
- A number of participants decided to delay disclosure, limit the number of people they told, or decided not to disclose at all.
- The participants were met with mixed reactions after their disclosures, ranging from positive to termination of employment.

Putting It into Practice
To better assist individuals with their disclosure decision, employment specialists and vocational rehabilitation practitioners can:
- Inform employers about:
  - The policies and laws of the Americans with Disabilities Act and the protections it provides individuals.
  - Specific disabilities.
  - Accommodation options.
Be familiar with the advantages and disadvantages of disability disclosure, including workplace accommodations.

Discuss with your consumer their fears, concerns, questions, benefits, and perceived risks of disclosure.

Provide support and information to enable your consumer to make an informed decision about disclosure.

More About this Research
Seventy-four individuals participated in the focus groups. Participants were asked several open-ended questions including: “Did you decide to tell your employer about your MS? If so, how did it impact either finding or maintaining employment?” As this was a qualitative study, no generalized conclusion could or should be made for the broader public, but the findings can be used as the framework for future studies on this topic.

Learn More
Access this research by visiting the Project E3 Research Database
Find It in the Project E3 Library

Questions? Feedback?
Do you have questions or feedback about putting this research into practice? We’re waiting to hear from you! Send us your questions or feedback.

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