

Next-Generation Disability Management: Diverse and Inclusive Strategies For All

Authors : Nidhi Malshe

Abstract : Background: Currently, there are approximately 1.3 billion individuals worldwide living with significant disabilities, which accounts for 16% of the global population—about 1 in 6 people. As the global population continues to grow, so does the number of people experiencing disabilities. Traffic accidents alone contribute to millions of injuries and disabilities each year, particularly among young people. Additionally, as life expectancy rises, more individuals are likely to experience disabilities in their later years. 27.0% of Canadians aged 15 and over, or 8 million people, had at least one disability in 2022. This represents an increase of 4.7 percentage points from 2017. A person with a disability earns 21.4% less on average as compared to a person without a disability. Using innovative and inclusive methods for accommodations, disability management, and employment, we can progress towards inclusive workplaces and potential income parity for this equity-seeking population. Objective: This study embraces innovative and inclusive approaches to disability management, thereby unlocking the advantages associated with a) fostering equal opportunities for all individuals, b) facilitating streamlined accommodations and making it easier for companies to accommodate people with disabilities, c) harnessing diverse perspectives to drive innovation and enhance overall productivity. Methodology: Literature review, assessments of specific needs and requirements in the workplace. a) Encourage the ability to think out of the box for potential workplace accommodations based on the specific needs of individuals. e.g., propose prolonged integration post disability. b) Perform a cost-benefit analysis of early interventions of return to work vs. duration on disability. c) Expand the scope of vocational assessment/retraining - e.g., retraining a person with permanent physical impairment to become a video game coder. d) Leverage the use of technology while planning to return to work e.g., speech-to-text software for persons with voice impairments. Hypothesized Results: Prolonged progression of return to work increases the potential for sustainable and productive employment. Co-developing a person-centric accommodation plan based on reported functional abilities and applying pioneering methods for extending accommodations to prevent secondary disabilities. Facilitate a sense of belonging by providing employees with benefits and initiatives that honor their unique contributions. Engage individuals with disabilities as active members of the planning committee to ensure the development of innovative and inclusive accommodations that address the needs of all. Conclusion: The global pandemic underscored the need for creativity in our daily routine. It is imperative to integrate the lessons learned from the pandemic, enhance them within employment, and return to work processes. These learnings can also be used to develop creative, distinct methods to ensure equal opportunities for everyone.

Keywords : disability management, diversity, inclusion, innovation

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