

Poster

Title: Can work promote social connectedness and better health?

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Main focus: Mainly research/Acquired deafblindness

Abstract:

Introduction: Research have demonstrated that persons with Usher syndrome have significantly poorer physical and psychological health compared to a reference group. There are however health differences within the Usher group where some persons showed better health than others. Recent reports reveal that work is an important factor associated with better health in persons with Usher syndrome type 2. In this study we have focused on persons with Usher syndrome type 1 (USH1), a group of persons with profound deafness and their health in relation to work activity.

Purpose: To explore the relation between health, social trust and financial situation in persons with USH1.

Material: The participants 67 (18-65 y) from the Swedish Usher database received a questionnaire and 47 persons were included in the study, 23 work active and 24 non-working (unemployed, on sick leave or disability pension).

Methods: The Swedish Health on Equal Terms questionnaire, covered health, living conditions, work, social relationships, financial situation among others. The questionnaire was translated to sign language and made accessible for braille readers.

Results: The USH1 work and non-work groups displayed significant differences with poorer physical and psychological health in the non-work group. The non-work group reported more problems with social trust, ontological insecurity and financial problems. Age, gender, hearing and vision impairment did not explain the differences.

Conclusions: Work can be crucial to reduce severe health problems in persons with USH1. Persons with USH1 have severe problems with physical and psychological health. These health problems as well as social trust, ontological insecurity and financial problems are increased in persons with USH1 who are not work active. Work is an important factor enhancing the social connectedness and perceived health in persons with deafblindness. This stresses the importance of early intervention of vocational training and work related rehabilitation.