

## **Illness perception, disability and quality in life in Dutch chronic RSI patients: does work status matter?**

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**Objective.** We studied differences between working and sick-listed chronic RSI patients' perspectives in the Netherlands with respect to indices of quality of life, disability and illness perception.

**Methods.** Data from a questionnaire study from 1121 members of the national RSI patient association were used. For descriptive purposes, demographics, work status and complaint-related variables such as severity, type, duration, and extent of complaints were asked for. Indices of quality of life were assessed through SF-36 subscales (e.g. physical functioning). A work-ability estimate and VAS scales were used to assess complaint-related decrease in quality of life. Illness perception was assessed through the Brief Illness Perception Questionnaire (IPQ-B). Working patients and sick-listed patients were identified and t-tests between the two groups were performed (p-values <0.01 were considered significant).

**Results.** Two-thirds of the respondents worked and one-third was sick-listed. Average duration of complaints was over 5 years in both groups. The sick-listed patients reported significantly more severe and extensive complaints than did the working patients. In addition, sick-listed patients reported significantly poorer general and mental health, physical functioning, emotional functioning, pain, and vitality. With respect to illness perception, both groups showed the same concerns about their complaints, but sick-listed patients had significantly more distorted perceptions in their emotional response, complaint understanding, identity, treatment control, personal control, timeline, and life consequences. Complaint-related decrease in quality of life was 31% in the working patients and 49% in the sick-listed patients.

**Conclusions.** A greater number and severe complaints were found among sick-listed chronic RSI patients: different illness perception, a considerably more decreased quality of life because of their complaints, and more disability.