

# A Longitudinal Study of the Impact of Employment Counselling on Self-Reported Health among Individuals with Mobility Impairments



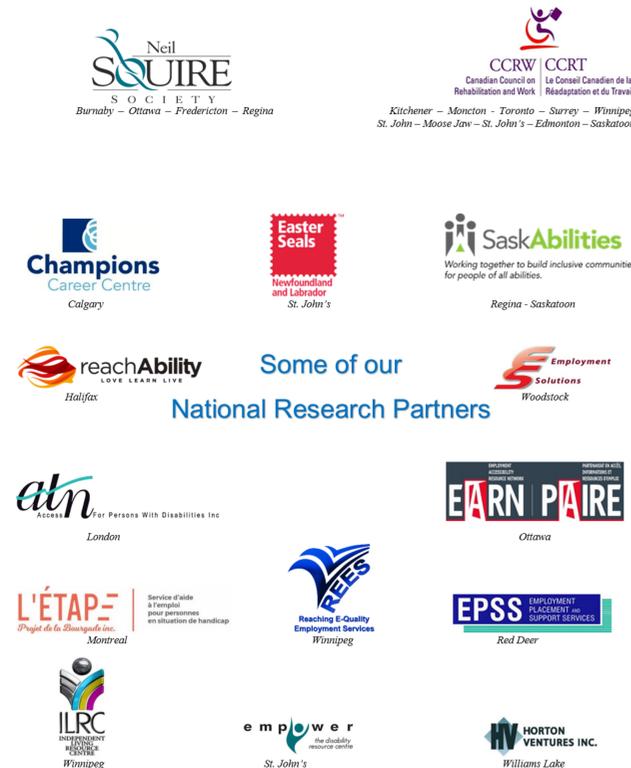
Tucker, S., Johnson, A., Connelly, C., Martin Ginis, K., Jetha, A., Gignac, M., and Birch, G.  
Contact: sean.tucker@uregina.ca



## INTRODUCTION

Little is known about the experiences of Canadians with mobility impairments who receive employment supports from community-based organizations. We present initial results from an ongoing national SSHRC-funded research project examining employability, health and wellbeing, employment experiences, and other outcomes among individuals with physical health conditions who are receiving employment counselling services. This study examines the influence of perceived counselling climate on self-reported health.

## National Partners



## PROCEDURE

Participants are clients of community organizations across Canada that provide employment support services (e.g., computer skills, resume building, job development, and post-job support) to individuals with physical disabilities (Figure 1). We contacted potential participants by email with a letter of information. A member of the research team then followed up with potential participants by phone to determine eligibility to participate in the study using the following criteria:

1. Have you read the Letter of Information?
    - If yes, the member of the research team continues to criteria 2.
    - If no, the member of the research team requests that the potential participant reads the Letter of Information, and arranges a time to call the potential participant back.
  2. Are you currently receiving employment supports?
    - If yes, the member of the research team continues to criteria 3.
    - If no, the member of the research team works with the potential participant to clarify if they are currently working with the community organization which referred them to find a job or complete any training. If no, the potential participant is determined to be ineligible.
  3. Do you have a long-term physical health problem or condition that affects your participation in your daily activities?
    - If yes, the member of the research team continues to criteria 4.
    - If no, the potential participant is determined to be ineligible.
  4. Which of these categories do you experience that limits your activity?
    - Pain (i.e. Existence of pain, either constant or episodic, that limits your daily activities)
    - Flexibility (i.e. Limitations to reaching above one's head or bending to pick up an object)
    - Mobility (Impairments to physical movement of the body or extremities; can include paralysis or difficulty in moving around, walking, or walking up or down a flight of stairs)
    - Dexterity (i.e. Difficult with fine motor skills using hands or fingers, such as grasping small objects, sending text messages, etc.)
    - The member of the research team asked potential participants if they experienced each of the above categories never (0), rarely (1), sometimes (2), often (3), always (4). In order to be eligible for participation in the study, individuals must have responded with a 2 (sometimes) or higher (often, always) to at least one of the above four categories.
- Participants are invited to complete one survey every two months (for one year) starting at the time they began receiving employment supports. An honorarium of \$15-\$25 was offered for each survey.

## MEASURES

*Self-reported health.* Participants were asked at Time 1 and Time 3 to rate their health in the past two months between 1 (poor) and 100 (excellent).

*Psychological distress.* Mental health was measured at Time 1 using Kessler et al.'s (2002) 10 item measure (range 10 to 50). Higher scores indicate greater risk of anxiety and depression.

*Perceived counselling climate.* Quality of employment counselling was measured at Time 2 using six items based on modified version of Williams et al.'s (1996) measure. Participants responded on a five-point scale (strongly disagree = 1 to strongly agree = 5). An example item is "I feel my employment counsellors provide me with choices and options". This measure demonstrated excellent reliability (alpha = .93).

## PARTICIPANTS AND RESULTS

The sample for this study is comprised of sixty-one participants (59% female, mean age = 41 years, SD = 14 years) who completed a baseline survey (Time 1) and two follow-up surveys at two (Time 2) and four months (Time 3) after the initial survey. The most common impairments included motor impairments and injuries affecting mobility, flexibility, and dexterity. Participants who were not receiving employment supports at Time 2 were excluded from the analysis.

Table 1 shows the correlations among the study variables. Regression analysis showed that counselling climate measured at Time 2 was positively associated with self-rated at Time 3 controlling for health at Time 1, psychological distress at Time 1, and employment status at Time 3 (Table 2). Clients who reported experiencing high quality employment counselling two months after they began receiving employment supports, also reported significantly higher health at Time 3 (R-squared change = 5.1%,  $p < .05$ ).

## RESULTS

Table 1: Correlations among the Study Variables (N = 61-76)

Variable	Mean	Std. Deviation	1.	2.	3.	4.
1. Health T1	57.94	28.12				
2. Psychological Distress T1	23.74	9.11	-.63***			
3. Employed T3	.53	.50	.01	.00		
4. Counselling Climate T2	5.46	1.23	-.02	.04	.18	
5. Health T3	57.05	25.27	.59***	-.45***	.05	.23

\*\*\*  $p < .001$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*  $p < .05$

Table 2: Linear Regression Results (N = 61)

Variable	Standardized Coefficient	Significance
Step 1		
Constant	-	.00**
Health T1	.45	.00**
Psychological Distress T1	-.20	.16
Employed T3	-.02	.88
Adjusted R-squared	.32	.00***
F	10.28	
df	56	
Step 2		
Constant	-	.36
Health T1	.46	.00**
Psychological Distress T1	-.20	.14
Employed T3	-.05	.67
Counselling Climate	.23	.03*
Change in adjusted R-squared	.04	.03*
F	4.73	
df	55	

DV = Health T3

\*\*\*  $p < .001$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*  $p < .05$

## CONCLUSION

We found that the quality of employment counselling from community-based organizations is positively associated with future self-reported health among individuals with mobility impairments. Employment counselling may have benefits beyond assisting individual development employment skills and find jobs.