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The positive effect of workplace accommodations on employment five years after a cancer diagnosis

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Background:

Each year, almost 400,000 new individuals are diagnosed with cancer in France and nearly half of them are in the working age. The disease was found to have a negative impact on professional life, especially for the most vulnerable cancer survivors. Literature reviews have pointed out the lack of studies focusing on the evaluation of interventions. In France, workstation layouts are recommended by the French law, but not mandatory to facilitate return to work. The aim of this study was to explore the effect of having a workstation layout after a cancer diagnosis on maintenance in employment five years after diagnosis.

Methods:

We used the French VICAN survey carried out in 2015/2016 on living conditions five years after a cancer diagnosis. Using propensity score matching, we matched two subsamples (with and without workstation layout) to investigate the effect of workstation layout taking into account the characteristics associated with the access to these arrangements.

Results:

Among the 1,514 individuals aged between 18 and 54 at diagnosis and employed in a salaried job at this time, three in five (61.2%) had a workstation layout within the five years following the diagnosis: 35.5% had a position type layout, 41.5% had a schedule layout, and 49.2% had a working time layout. Among those who had a workstation layout, 89.7% were still in employment five years after diagnosis against only 77.8% of those who did not so (p.value<0,001). After matching, having a workstation layout increased maintenance in employment from 77.8% to 95.0% (Average workstation layout effect on the treated of 0.172, 95% CI = [0.114; 0.229]).

Conclusions:

Having a workstation layout after a cancer diagnosis strongly increases maintenance in employment of five years cancer survivors. More research is needed to better understand the differences in access to these arrangements and the related selection effect.

Key messages:

- Workstation layout increases maintenance in employment of survivors five years after a cancer diagnosis. Therefore, it should be used more systematically to facilitate work with a chronic disease.
- Having a workstation layout may constitute a disadvantageous selection bias for more vulnerable workers. It can also lead to discrimination feelings.