



Disclosing versus concealing a mental health problem at work: what do we know and where do we go from here?

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1.004 Dover St

Abstract

Mental health is a growing global concern. For example, 41% of Canadians are at high risk for mental health issues, and recent estimates suggest that 1 in 5 working-age Canadians are adversely affected by a mental health challenge each year. In the UK, the recent results of the Adult Psychiatric Morbidity Survey show that 1 in 6 people over the age of 16 had a common mental health problem in the week prior to being interviewed, and that nearly half of adults think that they have had a diagnosable mental health condition at some point in their life. Mental health problems represent a significant cost to companies stemming from reduced productivity, absences, and turnover (e.g., £35 billion in 2017 in the UK according to the Centre for Mental Health). Despite a notable increase in public attention given to mental health, relatively little is known on how employers, and managers specifically, can best support their employees' mental health. When struggling with one's mental health, a highly promising first step toward receiving support at work is to disclose the struggle to one's manager, who would often be best positioned to provide some type of accommodation. However, many individuals prefer to conceal their challenge, often out of fear of being disadvantaged or treated poorly because of the stigmatization of mental health problems. In this presentation, Prof Lapierre will provide an overview of the limited scholarship addressing employees' disclosure of a mental health problem. He will also list a series of research questions that he believes should be addressed in order to offer organizations the means of ensuring that their managers create a work climate where their employees feel comfortable revealing their mental health problems, and where such revelation actually leads to positive outcomes

About the Speaker

Dr Lapierre is the Ian Telfer Professor of Workplace Behaviour and Health. His research focuses mainly on two topics: Occupational health psychology and leadership. His work on the first topic has focused on the intersection of individuals' work and family lives. He has strived to identify how organizational policies, individuals at work (supervisors and coworkers), employees themselves, and their families can each help them experience less work-family conflict, more work-family enrichment, and overall better health. In his work on leadership, Dr Lapierre has been giving particular attention to relational dynamics between managers (supervisors) and each of their employees (subordinates). More recently, he has focused on the influence that individuals' acts of followership can have on others' leadership.