

Depression follows illness to work

Individuals returning to work following absence due to a physical condition such as back pain, cancer or heart disease are at risk of mild to moderate depression, researchers have found. But they say those who do become depressed worry about telling their employers. 'Returning to work, the role of depression', published by the Mental Health Foundation, details the findings of a research study carried out by Loughborough University. The researchers compared the return to work experiences of individuals with heart disease, back pain and cancer to individuals with depression and anxiety. They found almost half (45 per cent) of those with a physical condition experienced mild to moderate depression but were more worried about telling their employer about their mental health issues than their cancer or heart disease. The study found that while most line managers were initially supportive when a person returned to work, they were not aware of the long-term effects of a serious physical illness or condition upon an employee's ability to work and on their mental health. There was a consistent lack of follow-up by occupational health, line managers and human resources on employees' general health and psychological well-being after returning to work. Andrew McCulloch, the chief executive of the Mental Health Foundation, commented: "This research shows that managers are willing to help but they often lack the knowledge or skills required." The report calls for managers, occupational health and employees to work together both before and after an employee returns to work. The government's welfare strategy calls employers to assist workers with mental health problems to return to work.

- Returning to work, the role of depression – [webpage](#), [full report](#) and [executive summary](#). [BBC News Online](#).