

SICKLE CELL

Advice to Employers



**INFORMATION, COUNSELLING
AND CARING FOR THOSE WITH
SICKLE CELL DISORDERS
AND THEIR FAMILIES**

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Sickle cell Disorders

Fiction

Some people believe sickle cell Disorders affect only black people and that sufferers invariably die before the age of twenty-one. They also believe that the sufferer is in constant pain and is frequently admitted to hospital.

This leaflet is intended to dispel this myth and to explain the true nature of sickle cell disorders and how an individual with this condition can lead a good and useful life while being gainfully employed.

Fact

An estimated 150 - 200 babies a year are being born a year are born with this condition. Most are of African–Caribbean origin, and many also come from the Mediterranean, Middle East and Asian countries.

Not all people with Sickle Cell disorder are severely affected. There are milder forms of the disorder called sc and sickle-b-Thalassaemia. Sufferers of the milder forms of sickle cell usually have the most severe form of sickle cell disorders, now you have near normal life expectancy and can enjoy long periods, even years, of good life.

What are sickle cell disorders?

This is due to an inherited abnormality of the red blood cells, that cause them to become rigid and sickle shaped, hence the name. Sickle cells are rigid and cannot flow smoothly through the small blood vessels. This in turn can cause a blockage of the blood supply restricting the vital flow of oxygen these blood cells carry from the lungs to the parts of the body requiring replenishment. Some sufferers can experience severe pain, when this occurs and this is called a crisis. In most acute crisis damage to the bones, muscle tissue and the lungs may occur, if treatment is not applied. Patients with a sickle cell disorder are also prone to anemia and sometimes

become tired and short of breath .the condition is life long, there is no cure at the present moment.

Treatment and Medical Support.

An individual with sickle cell Disorders will take regular vitamins (folic acid) and must at all time does ensure a good intake of fluids (this is required to assist the smooth flow of blood). Typically, they may require about 1/4 Liter of water, tea, and coffee and fruit juice every 60 – 90 minutes. This high intake of fluid will result in the individual wishing to pass water more frequently than their colleagues.

Usually the sufferer is well but has to attend clinic every six months. Some general rules of good health care are very important to individuals with a sickle cell disorder (as they are with your whole work force). Both active and passive smoking, alcohol and irregular or inadequate diet may damage the balance of health and provoke a period of ill health.

A painful crisis –dealing with the plan

It is understandable that people are worried about the acute attack of pain which is due to a sickle cell disorder. Sufferers invariably know what to do when a severe pain starts. They rest; they relax, take painkillers and drink plenty of fluids. If the pain does not subside, they will normally go to the hospital which they normally attend.

It is important to emphasize that the severity and frequency of the crises varies tremendously. Some sufferers have never had a crisis. Others can have two or three a year for a couple of years and then have none for periods of time.

Intelligence, hearing and manual dexterity are not affected by sickle cell disorders. In a very few cases there may be eye or hip problems therefore their sight or mobility could be affected. These individuals are under long-term specialist care and limitations are clearly defined and will have been made known to their employer on the medical questionnaire.

Implication at work

Suitable employment

The majority of clerical, administrative, professional, artistic and light industrial work is suitable. Heavy manual work jobs that cannot be interrupted to take fluids, jobs that involve extreme changes of temperature and jobs with lowered oxygen concentration are therefore unsuitable for employees with Sickle Cell Disorders.

Many persons with Sickle Cell disorder are successfully employed full time as doctors, nurses, teachers, health service workers and factory production assistants.

Attendance at Work

One cannot pretend that employing a person with a Sickle Cell Disorder is free from problems. An important problem is the question of absence from the work place. If the job is suitable and the employer understands that the nature of Sickle Cell Disorder, absence from work is no more frequent. (In the case of someone with the disorder) than any other member of the work force. The individual with Sickle Cell Disorder must understand their limitation before taking on any employment.

An important point for employer to note is that while a Sickle Cell sufferer is well they are in every way a normal employee, capable of working to full capacity.

Pension and Insurance

The majority of persons suffering with a Sickle Cell Disorder can join pension schemes run by their employers, however, with life assurance linked schemes; resistance is sometimes encountered by the insurers who have not kept abreast with the recent changes in treatment. Should any pension fund manager require help or information on Sickle Cell Disorder they should be referred to:

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