



The Employer's Role in Mental Health Care

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Howard Mavity's article "The Employer's Role in Mental Health Care" was featured in *Risk Management* on September 1, 2015.

In March, Germanwings Flight 9525 crashed in the French Alps, killing all 150 passengers and crew members on board. Investigators later determined that the crash was deliberately caused by co-pilot Andreas Lubitz, who had a history of depression, reportedly exhibited suicidal tendencies and contacted a number of doctors for help in the weeks before the disaster.

The incident provoked a long overdue discussion on an employer's role in mental health. According to the National Alliance on Mental Illness, one in five adults in the United States suffers some sort of mental illness and 14.8 million live with major depression. In the workplace, depression costs tens of billions of dollars from lost productivity, workplace accidents, distraction and fatigue. A landmark Canadian study of clinically depressed workers found that 96% of respondents suffered fatigue, 93% experienced loss of concentration, and 70% said their depression made them less efficient at work.

While individuals with mood disorders are usually more of a threat to themselves than others, the effects of depression may lead to conflicts with coworkers and even influence the employee's view of whether their employer mistreats or discriminates against them. Legal, ethical and moral dilemmas often come into conflict when determining the best course of action for addressing these mental health issues at work.

In the article, Howard examines the following topics related to employees suffering from a mental illness:

- Legal Barriers
- Education and Outreach
- Establishing Standards
- Weighing the Risks

If employers believe that an employee may be suffering from a mental illness, they have to consider whether the illness affects the performance of essential job functions and what the risk exposure could be for coworkers and the public. There are no easy solutions to these issues, but it is

important to objectively analyze the situation before taking action to best mitigate the risks to all involved.

To read the full article, please visit *Risk Management*.

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