"You’re making people in the office feel very uncomfortable": Experiences of miscarriage in the pro-natal workplace

Other

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Disenfranchised grief (Unacknowledged) [6, 16]

Heavy bleeding [4]

Anxiety (1 in 4) [4, 6, 7]

Severe pain [4]

Contractions [19]

Suicidal thoughts

PTSD (3 in 6) [4]

Sometimes surgery/medical management

1. Train HR & managers, equipping them with the knowledge & confidence to support affected employees.

2. Implement a pregnancy loss policy outlining entitlements to pay & leave support.

3. Inform employees about their rights to protected paid leave.

4. Tackle pro-natal cultures through training.

5. Provide accessible information on pregnancy loss.

6. Set up/encourage support groups.

7. Acknowledge Baby Loss Awareness Week.

8. Provide Training for all employees – an organisation-wide approach.

9. Assign a designated person/specialist in reproductive issues.

10. Display empathy & recognise the loss.

Conclusions: What do workplaces need to do?

Inconsistent practice due to lack of formal policy

Discriminatory practice, incl. formal warnings for taking sick leave

Inappropriate leave (e.g., sick, compassionate & annual leave when miscarriage is protected by pregnancy-related sickness)

Unrealistic workloads/expectations upon returning to work

Pro-natal cultures traumatic for affected employees (from baby showers at work to more flexibility permitted for parents)

The research presented offers a narrative approach to the experiences of miscarriage and how they might be addressed in the workplace. Barriers to support include recognition of miscarriage as a bereavement experience, lack of formalised policies, insensitive or microaggressions, and lack of support for affected employees.

An alternative approach is needed to adequately support employees as they return to work, ensuring that they feel valued and supported throughout their experience of loss.

References: