Health Bulletin

Career Success With A Chronic Illness

(NAPSA)—Everyone has a sick day or two at work. But how do you climb the career ladder when you don't feel well for months or years? Chronic conditions like arthritis, diabetes and digestive disorders can make work-related tasks difficult. For example, arthritis can make typing, taking notes or even holding the telephone a challenge.

A recent survey from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) found that 33 percent of workers with arthritis in the United States experience work limitations due to their condition. No matter what their condition, most people cannot afford to stop working to focus on their health. Many hesitate to inform their employers for fear of being passed over for promotion or resented by coworkers.

Firefighter Rick Williams experienced firsthand how difficult work can be when trying to manage a disease. Six years ago, Rick was diagnosed with rheumatoid arthritis (RA), a chronic disease that affects over 2 million Americans and is characterized by pain and loss of joint motion. He experienced stiffness and pain in his hands that made crucial parts of his job, such as lifting a fire hose, extremely difficult. Rick felt he had to hide his condition from coworkers, and worried about being seen as weak. He recalls, "I had to make a decision about my career. I thought it was quickly coming to an end." Rick has since started taking Humira (adalimumab), a medication used to treat moderate to severe RA and certain other conditions. It has helped reduce the pain and stiffness and has helped his ability to perform some of these activities, but he still remembers how every day was a challenge.

How to Make Your Career Work for You

1. If you cannot handle certain tasks, be proactive in finding and proposing solutions. For example, look at how tasks might be redistributed or exchanged and discuss with your co-workers and supervisor.
2. When you're having a good day, offer to help others who have pitched in for you.
3. Manage your energy during the day. Consider asking your employer about a flexible schedule or working from home.

Many times, the hardest part about working with a chronic illness is knowing what to tell people at work. Rosalind Joffe, an executive career coach who suffers from chronic illness herself, offers helpful tips on how to maintain success and productivity at work. She stresses the importance of knowing your rights and says, "There is no law that forces employees to disclose information about their condition to an employer. But if your condition impacts your performance at work, it's important to find strategies so that you can stay healthy and productive. Educate yourself about the latest treatment options and coping strategies."

If you or someone you know suffers from rheumatoid arthritis and is struggling at work, visit www.RA.com for more helpful workplace tips. More information about Humira, including full prescribing information and Medication Guide, is available on the Web site www.rxabbott.com or in the United States by calling Abbott Medical Information at (800) 633-9110.