

SOCIAL WORKERS AND HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONALS

WHEN YOU MEET A PERSON WITH HIDRADENITIS SUPPURATIVA

Hidradenitis suppurativa, usually referred to as HS, is a chronic skin disease causing abscesses, nodules or cysts in areas where skin touches skin.



HS is a disease that often has a serious impact on patients' daily lives. When the disease breaks out, the fluid-filled abscesses, odour problems and pain makes it a real challenge to live a normal life – whether you are a teenager, a student or active on the labour market.

HS is not only a physical challenge, it may also challenge patients' mental health. Patients may feel depressed, experience a confidence blow or find it hard to perform their daily activities. The consequences for patients are often extensive. These may involve absence due to disease outbreak, surgery and mental challenges. Because of its symptoms, the disease is tabooed and many live with the disease in secret.

So when you face an HS patient – regardless of whether you are a social worker, a doctor or something completely different – it is important that you understand the scope of the disease and provide guidance on the potential sources of support that may

make it easier for the patient to play an active role in society.

Chronically ill HS patients can apply for support within several regulatory areas, including the employment, social and health sectors.

"My encounter with the public authorities has been an overwhelming experience – for better or worse. I have had really great meetings with the municipal social workers, but I have also felt like I was being thrown between different public authorities, because no one knew about HS and consequently did not know whether I was eligible for support."

- HS-patient



HS affects mental health; 36% suffer from depression



Many HS patients suffer from other diseases such as rheumatism and the intestinal Morbus Crohn

2%

Studies indicate that approx. 2% of the adult population in Denmark suffer from HS to varying degrees

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POTENTIAL SOURCES OF SUPPORT IN THE LABOUR MARKET, EMPLOYMENT, SOCIAL AND HEALTH SECTORS



POTENTIAL SOURCES OF SUPPORT IN THE LABOUR MARKET SECTOR

Section 56 agreement

A flexible and accommodating workplace is often necessary in order for an HS patient to be happy with his or her job, as experience shows that patients are often absent from work for more than 10 days a year. In these cases, a Section 56 agreement between the workplace, the patient and the employee's municipality of residence may be a good option. Under such an agreement, both public and private employers can be exempted from paying sickness benefit during the employer period, i.e. the first 30 working days of a period of absence due to sickness, when the notice of sickness concerns a chronic disease such as HS.

Flexible jobs

In some cases the HS patient may be affected to such an extent that a flexible job is the best solution. A flexible job involves an agreement between the employer and the employee and must be applied for in the patient's municipality of residence. Approval for a flexible job is subject to the patient being under retirement age, being unable to obtain or keep a job on normal conditions and having permanently reduced earning capacity.

POTENTIAL SOURCES OF SUPPORT IN THE EMPLOYMENT SECTOR

Disability pension

Disability pension may be an option for HS patients whose earning capacity is permanently reduced to such an extent that the patient is unable to be self-supporting through employment. In general, people under 40 years of age are not eligible for disability pension, unless their functional capacity is limited

to such an extent that they are unable to retain or develop their earning capacity. Persons under 40 years of age, who have already been awarded disability pension, get the opportunity to participate in resource programmes if they want to and if the municipality finds that they may benefit from this.

Rehabilitation

Rehabilitation may provide the help needed for an HS patient to stay in active employment. This may include financial support or retraining to a job that the patient is able to manage despite having a chronic disease. A rehabilitation programme may consist of guidance and upgrading of skills, including short briefing and guidance processes or ordinary training courses. In connection with a rehabilitation programme, the municipality will draw up a rehabilitation plan, taking the patient's health, skills and interests into account.

POTENTIAL SOURCES OF SUPPORT IN THE SOCIAL SECTOR

Reimbursement of additional expenses

HS patients between the ages of 18 and 65 whose daily lives are affected by permanently reduced physical or mental functional capacity may apply for reimbursement of additional expenses related to HS, e.g. for medication. Such applications must be in accordance with Section 100 of the Danish Service Act. The HS patient must render probable or document additional expenses of at least DKK 6,000 annually, or at least DKK 500/month. Applications for reimbursement of additional expenses must be submitted to the municipality.

Aid

Many HS patients use huge amounts

of dressings and tube gauze because of the extensive suppuration of their abscesses. In such cases, the municipality can grant financial support to patients with permanently reduced physical or mental functional capacity. In order to be eligible for support, the aid must be capable of remedying permanent effects of the reduced functional capacity, make daily life easier or be necessary for the patient to perform his or her job. Applications for support for aids must be submitted to the municipality via www.borger.dk.

If an application is granted, support will be provided in accordance with Section 112 of the Danish Social Services Act.

POTENTIAL SOURCES OF SUPPORT IN THE HEALTH SECTOR

Medicine reimbursement

HS patients with a significant, permanent and well-documented need for medicinal products may apply to the Danish Health and Medicines Authority for reimbursement for the chronically ill. It is a precondition for granting the application that the HS patient's total expenses for reimbursable medicine exceed DKK 21,831 for children and young people under the age of 18 and DKK 17,738 kr. for adults. This equals a patient's share of expenses of DKK 3,830 annually for both children and adults (as at 1 January 2015). The application must be submitted by the doctor to the Danish Health and Medicines Authority.

Please contact the Patient Association HS Denmark at www.hidrosadenitis.dk if you have additional questions.