

A simple questionnaire to replace a doctor's exam

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The good news -- you've been offered the perfect job. The not-so-good news — it's contingent on a medical exam. For the disabled, people with diseases like HIV, or those who are simply mega-stressed at the thought of a doctor's waiting room, undergoing a medical exam to qualify for a job can be daunting. For them, new research from Tel Aviv University brings excellent news.

Medical exams are often not an accurate predictor of competency or job performance, says Tel Aviv University researcher Dr. Shlomo Moshe, an occupational physician from the Sackler Faculty of Medicine. Thanks to his new research, unnecessary and uncomfortable medical and psychological tests can now be replaced with a pencil and paper — and can provide a much more accurate forecast.

"A questionnaire can effectively rule out those who are not fit for white collar and non-hazardous blue collar positions," Dr. Moshe says, "and with our test, more people are actually found fit for work than those assessed by a medical exam."

A Win-Win for the Workplace

The research is excellent news for employers, too.

The potential savings in medical costs are enormous — as are the costs of litigation after a rescinded offer. Currently, the Americans with

Disabilities Act means employers can't order medical tests for prospective hires until after a job offer has been made. Since the act went into effect, a number of complicated lawsuits have arisen from companies rescinding job offers.

"It's only natural that an employer wants to be sure he won't be affected by an employee's medical problems, and that a disability won't affect job performance," says Dr. Moshe. "He wants a certificate of health. Now we can give that without extracting a drop of blood or urine."

Based on data collected during his experience as an occupational physician and from insurance companies, Dr. Moshe's non-invasive "medical test" can be performed in an office or online. The predictive power of the test is so strong, results indicate, that it can not only eliminate unnecessary medical exams, but can help those previously deemed unemployable find suitable work. The test is already used widely in Israel.

Extremely High Accuracy

Researchers in the study show that 98% of all people who take the questionnaire are correctly deemed suitable for employment. The test is so effective that occupational experts in America have been asking for a copy of the questionnaire. It's now available in the *Occupational Medicine* journal which reports on Dr. Moshe's study.

Israeli employers have been using the questionnaire since 2000. It includes several dozen questions, including: Are you taking medications regularly? Have you ever filed a disability claim? Do you have allergies to any food and medications? Have you ever been injured in an accident?

Antiquated Tests Are Costly and Irrelevant

Most of the medical tests currently used to screen prospective employees were developed decades ago, when workers were frequently exposed to dangerous substances such as lead and asbestos. Because new safety standards limit the incidence of exposure to such toxins, a majority of traditional medical tests are completely redundant, Dr. Moshe indicates. And major communicable diseases like tuberculosis, formerly common, are found quite rarely today.

"Obviously, employers, are afraid of lawsuits and poor performance on the job," Dr. Moshe concludes. "Our test gives everyone in the system job security."

Source: American Friends of Tel Aviv University

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