Progression of Disability Benefits: A Perspective on Multiple Sclerosis

Article Summary:

This article is a follow up to a larger study that looked at the Progression of Disability Benefits (PODB) for individuals with disability as a whole. This article takes a closer look at the PODB specifically for individuals with Multiple Sclerosis (MS). PODB is defined as "the migration of workers with work-limiting disabilities [such as MS] as they move through a system of economic disability benefits resulting in their ultimate placement into the Social Security Disability system" (Fraser, McMahon, & Danczyk-Hawley, 2003).

Multiple Sclerosis (MS) is a "central nervous system disorder of slow and uneven progression" (Fraser, McMahon, & Danczyk-Hawley, 2003). Research has shown that the onset of MS generally strikes in the mid-thirties or early forties for most individuals with MS and that primarily well educated women are impacted by this disorder.

First, this study looks at the PODB for individuals with MS in relation to individuals from the general disability population with any other type of disability.

Next, the study examines if variables such as "age, gender, and type of employer" affects the PODB of employees with MS differently than employees from the general disability population.

Finally, this study compares the POBD for individuals with MS to that of another chronic neurological disease, epilepsy.

The findings from this study, though somewhat limited by the sample, were considerable. Individuals with MS progress more quickly to the SSDI status than do individuals from the general population of workers with disabilities. The study also noted that although women created 77% of the sample of individuals with MS, one in two males secured SSDI status versus one in three women from this sample. The study suggests that this may be due to the type of physical work that often men are involved in at work. Finding related to the POBD for individuals with MS in comparison to the POBD for individuals with epilepsy was dramatic. Individuals with epilepsy were more likely to stay in short-term or long-term disability status, with little movement to SSDI status. The study suggests that these findings may be related to the various options and treatments available for managing seizure disorders.

Reference: