

Stroke Awareness Week – advice for employers from SAE4D

In Stroke Awareness Week this week, employers should take time to review their policies relating to the management of employees who may suffer permanent disability as a result of a stroke.

So says Dr Jerry Gule, Chairman of South African Employers for Disability (SAE4D), an employer organisation that is committed to addressing issues confronting the integration of people with disabilities in the workplace.

While stroke is the [second most common cause of death worldwide](#), the burden of stroke does not only lie in the high rate of mortality – around [25 percent](#) of all stroke victims die – but also the fact that up to 50 percent of stroke survivors are left chronically disabled.

“Stroke can and does happen to anyone – young or old, fit or couch potato, rich or poor, employed or unemployed, management executive or labourer. It’s estimated that around a quarter of all stroke victims are of economically active age, with 2,5 percent younger than thirty,” Dr Gule says.

The Department of Labour’s [Code of Good Practice](#) on key aspects of disability in the workplace offers employers guidelines about dealing with employees who become disabled during employment.

“The key message from the Code is that employers should do everything they can to keep the person employed. This might entail making special arrangements to enable that person to retain his or her job if possible. It might also mean offering alternative work, reduced work or a flexible work placement.

“Termination of the person’s employment should be regarded as a last resort. It should only be considered after the employee has been thoroughly consulted and all possible alternatives have been explored.” Dr Gule says.

Dr Gule also emphasises that where employers provide disability benefits, employees must be fairly advised about the exact nature of the benefit and the medium- and long-term implications of their applying for the benefit and resigning from their job because of their disability.

“However, if after exploring all alternative, the employee cannot be accommodated in his or her current or alternative job, the employer may terminate the employment relationship.

“When taking this step, it is vitally important that the employer ensure that any criteria used to determine the employee’s unsuitability to meet operation requirements do not directly or indirectly unfairly discriminate against people with disabilities,” he concludes.

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About SAE4D

South African Employers for Disability (SAE4D) is a body constituted by employers who are committed to addressing issues confronting the integration of people with disabilities in the workplace. The organisation was set up to share experience, develop best practices, confront and tackle prejudices that act as barriers to the integration of people with disabilities in the workplace, and form a common understanding of the challenges and solutions required to fully develop the potential of people with disabilities to contribute meaningfully to society and business.

SAE4D members are South African companies who are signatories to the Constitution of the SAE4D, its principles and values.

Current SAE4D members include: ABB; Absa; Anglo American; Barloworld; Bowman Gilfillan; Edcon; Ernst & Young; Eskom; Glenrand; KPMG; Lorimar; Nedbank; PPC; SAB and Total.

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