

**Interview with Roy Brown, Emeritus Professor University of Calgary, Canada & Flinders University, Australia**

***'Little things often count for a lot'***

During the meeting of CEC with Disability Studies in the Netherlands at the 18th of April, Emeritus Professor Roy Brown held a lecture about 'Wellbeing for people with disabilities'. He stated that the quality of life of a person with a disability is the most important goal to achieve in helping people to get back into society and to employment. 'Using a quality of life approach means that the rehabilitation strategy is about life choices, including employment, but not just employment.' An interview with the professor.

*Why is quality of life important for disabled people?*

'If we want to improve employment outcomes for people with disabilities, we must continue to move from the medical model of disability to more comprehensive models such as the social and biopsychological model of disability. Also we have to realize that it's not only about the quality of life of the disabled person, but also about the quality of life of their families and friends. For example: if a disabled adult child is without work, school or daycare, then this means one of his parents often stays at home to take care of him and give up their job. This has consequences for the quality of life of this parent and the economic status of the family.'

*What does quality of life comprehend?*

'Quality of life is experienced when a person's basic needs are met and when he or she has the opportunity to pursue and achieve goals in major life settings. Key descriptors of quality of life are objective, subjective and individual experiences of wellbeing, whether somebody is satisfied and whether somebody has opportunities and choices. If people with a disability can make their own choices, then they are in charge, which is beneficial for their self-image. Also it's important to challenge people with a disability. For example: in some Universities and colleges in Canada people with an intellectual disability followed education at the university. They didn't all get a degree or diplomas, but there were other important benefits. Their parents saw they were developing, adults with disabilities joined student associations, got new friends; in all, they flourished because of the whole new and different and also stimulating and normalizing atmosphere.'

*Why do you think the cooperation of DISN with UWV is important?*

'I think it is important to make links because it puts more information in the systems and it gives different perspectives. People can think 'we can do things differently'. You get more information in your organization and vice versa. It also represents a powerhouse: cooperation makes you more powerful. Because if you share your ideas, you will probably develop common goals and represent the co-ordinated perspective more powerfully whenever you speak with others.'

*What is your most important suggestion for the Dutch health insurance professionals?*

My most important suggestion is a good understanding of what it means to be disabled for your clients. Trying to see what is behind the problems of your clients. Because very often little things count for a lot. For example: a disabled person in a wheelchair had to hand over his wheelchair every time the battery broke down. It had to go to a central point in the country for reparation. All this time he would be without a wheelchair, stuck in his house. Now, the solution was relatively easy as it was possible to get the country's motor association to come to the home and do minor repairs like recharging the battery. My second suggestion is also to try to realize what their families feel and experience. Because if the focus is also on quality of life for the family of disabled persons, the chances of success in employment is higher.'