HEALTHIER AND SAFER WORKING ENVIRONMENTS: LEVERAGING THE POWER OF PREVENTION

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This presentation reviews the results of recent published research, as well as case studies regarding the impact of the health and safety of the workforce on business and industry. It also provides an overview of the business case and tools to lead employers to invest in integrated health and safety strategies that positively leverage prevention in effective workplace health and productivity management initiatives. The bottom line is that good health and safety is good business.

Studies have begun linking worker health with the market performance of the companies that employ them1. The rise of interest in health, safety and productivity measures as indicators of corporate value is gaining traction among thought leaders who believe a model of health, safety and productivity metrics reporting could become a new standard - which further advances the idea of public reporting of workforce health measures as a means of gauging corporate performance and better informing the investment community.

Therefore, the American College of Occupational and Environmental Medicine (ACOEM) and Underwriters Laboratories brought together thought leaders, practitioners and researchers in health and safety and developed an Integrated Health and Safety Index (IHS Index). The IHS Index utilizes the three well-established dimensions of the Dow Jones Sustainability Index - economic, social and environmental - in an IHS framework. The IHS Index includes comprehensive standards, metrics and scoring methodologies that can be applied to any employer or organization, from small to large, to help organizations arrive at a consistent measurement of their health, safety and productivity management integration2.

There is strong evidence that health-related productivity loss such as substandard performance on the job (presenteeism) as well as employee absences due to illness, injury and other factors (absenteeism) add compelling cost burdens to employers. Research published in the Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine (JOEM)3 showed that workforce health conditions caused an average monetized productivity loss of 2.3 times the medical and pharmacy expenditures for chronic health conditions (USD 2.3: USD 1). Medical and pharmacy claims were matched with the health-related presenteeism and absenteeism data obtained from the Dr. Ron Kessler (Harvard/WHO) to identify the top health conditions driving total cost for employers. Furthermore, an important new study published in JOEM showed the health-related productivity loss of employers in Japan as compared to employers in the US4.

As health risks go, so go health costs. In a separate clinical study following 7,804 individuals from a variety of employer groups who followed a high tech and high touch personalized preventive health program for two years, individual health risks were significantly reduced. Further, there was a migration from higher overall risk to lower overall health risk in the intervention population5. In fact, Harvard Medical School researchers published a study in the journal Health Affairs in 2010, a critical meta-analysis of 22 research studies in the scientific literature demonstrating that medical and pharmacy costs fall by about USD 3.27 and absenteeism costs fall by about USD 2.73 for every USD 1 invested in a comprehensive wellness program, which results in a return on investment (ROI) of six to one6.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

a. Identifying the key trends that are advancing the Value of Health and Safety, and the Power of Prevention in workplace health and productivity management initiatives, by answering the following questions:
   • Why is integrating health and safety with a focus on prevention in health and productivity management initiatives so incredibly important?
   • How can employers use the Integrated Health and Safety Index scoring and assessment methodology to help implement integrated health, safety and productivity management strategies?
• What are some examples of compelling and innovative integrated health, safety and productivity management initiatives?

b. Delineating the business value of good health and safety and the total cost (medical/pharmacy and absenteeism/presenteeism costs) impact of poor health and safety on employers.

c. Understanding the business case to present to employers for integrating health, safety and productivity management strategies as an investment to be leveraged rather than a cost to be justified.

d. Defining key elements of integrated workplace health, safety and productivity enhancement strategies.

e. Reviewing published studies and case studies of the outcome results of effective workplace health, safety and productivity management initiatives.

REFERENCES


