

RESEARCH REVIEW

Keeping you up to date with the latest peer-reviewed research on workforce health and productivity

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In this issue:

- [Majority of COVID-19 Workers' Compensation Claims Were from Healthcare Workers](#)
- [Brokers Play a Facilitator Role in Wellness Program Uptake Among Small Employers](#)
- [Do Mental Health Apps Work Among the Working Population?](#)
- [Flu Vaccination in the Workplace Can Provide Up to a 130% Return on Investment](#)
- [Telehealth Use Increases during COVID-19 with Variation in Uptake Across Populations, Specialties, and Conditions](#)
- [Small Businesses' Response to COVID-19 Influenced Employee Mental Wellbeing](#)

Majority of COVID-19 Workers' Compensation Claims Were from Healthcare Workers

[JOEM](#)

During the first eight months of 2020, 9% of all workers compensation claims in 11 Midwest states were COVID-19 related. COVID-19 related claims peaked in April, making up approximately a third of all claims in that month. The healthcare industry submitted the most claims overall, and healthcare workers represented an overwhelming majority (84%) of COVID-19 related claims. All other industries were more likely to have a claim for non-COVID illnesses and injuries. Employees in presumption states – where employers had to prove that a COVID-19 infection was not work-related – were more likely to file COVID-19

related claims than employees not in presumption states.

+ COVID-19 Disability Leave Claims: Check out [IBI's interactive map](#) to project incidences and costs of COVID-19 disability leave claims while taking into account the geographic variation in COVID-19 cases, employment patterns, industry mix, and wages.

Brokers Play a Facilitator Role in Wellness Program Uptake Among Small Employers

[*American Journal of Health Promotion*](#)

Small businesses (with 50 or fewer workers) employed 34 million Americans in 2018, approximately one-third of the private sector workforce. These businesses rely heavily on insurance brokers and vendors when making decisions about implementing workplace wellbeing and health promotion programs. In-depth interviews with 20 health insurance brokers reveal that they provide social capital (such as connections to professional networks, information, continuous education, relationships of trust) to small employers who otherwise have little access to market-based health and well-being programs. These relationships reduce the research costs and procedural burdens that would make implementing workplace programs infeasible in markets with few options for small firms.

Do Mental Health Apps Work Among the Working Population?

[*Psychiatric Annals*](#)

A review of 12 peer-reviewed, experimental studies focused on the effectiveness of mental health apps in the workplace found that only one study measured productivity outcomes. After five weeks of use among a sample of mostly male laborers, an increase in work performance and a decrease in absenteeism were observed. The review authors advise that clinicians and experts who evaluate these apps should consider limitations in study designs before implementing to a broader workforce.

Flu Vaccination in the Workplace Can Provide Up to a 130% Return on Investment

[*Vaccine*](#)

Workplace flu vaccination efforts save approximately 10 euros (\$12) per vaccinated employee as a result of decreased absence and provide a 130% return on investment. Researchers estimate that if 90% of employees are vaccinated, employers could save 30 million euros (\$36 million) due to decreases in workplace absences — approximately 22 million euros (nearly \$27 million) more than at the observed vaccination rate of 21%. Note, the cost-benefit ratio of flu vaccination in the workplace may vary year to year due to differences in flu virulence and vaccine efficacy.

Telehealth Use Increases during COVID-19 with Variation in Uptake Across Populations, Specialties, and Conditions

[*Health Affairs*](#)

A study of nearly 17 million insured individuals found that telehealth use increased 23-fold after the pandemic began. While overall medical visits dropped by 35% between January to June 2020, telehealth visits made up 30% of the visits that did occur. Across patient demographics, older patients had the lowest uptake in telemedicine, as did patients in rural isolated areas with higher levels of poverty and smaller minority populations. Across specialties, psychiatry, endocrinology, and neurology had the greatest uptake of telemedicine, while optometry, physical therapy, ophthalmology, and orthopedics saw the lowest uptake. Across conditions, mental illnesses such as depression and bipolar disorder were most often treated through telemedicine while hypertension and diabetes were treated less frequently.

+ Stay tuned: IBI's 2021 [research agenda](#) will review the value of telehealth and digital health solutions. Be on the look out for a publication later this year.

Small Businesses' Response to COVID-19 Influenced Employee Mental Wellbeing

[*Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine*](#)

A survey of nearly 500 employees from 30 small employers found that the better a respondent felt about how their company's leadership managed the COVID-19 crisis, the more likely they were to report better mental well-being. Changes in job duties or being unable to work due to the pandemic were associated with worse mental well-being. Employees with favorable perceptions of their company's COVID-19 responses also felt that their

company had better safety and health climates, suggesting that leadership support of workplace safety and health procedures can provide a protective effect for small business employees.

+ Being Prepared Has Several Benefits: IBI's recent [CFO survey](#) revealed that companies with continuity plans fared better during the pandemic including in areas like confidence that their health benefits strategy met financial, chronic health and mental health needs.



Upcoming Events

October 5-6, 2021: Save the Date
- [IBI/Conference Board Health and Productivity Forum](#)

HEALTH AND PRODUCTIVITY AT WORK

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