

# RESEARCH REVIEW

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**April 13, 2021**

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## **Working Remote: Certain Lifestyle and Home Conditions Impact Wellbeing**

[JOEM](#)

Office workers with desk jobs who transitioned to work-from-home (WFH) during the pandemic had better physical and mental well-being if they experienced increased communications with co-workers, higher levels of exercise or healthier eating (compared to their pre-pandemic levels). On average, workers with an infant in the home reported better mental well-being than workers with no children, but more distractions were generally bad for mental well-being. Employees who reported more satisfaction with their home office environment (such as air quality, noise, dedicated workspaces) also reported that they developed fewer new physical and mental health issues

since transitioning from WFH. The findings suggest that employers could improve the health and wellbeing of WFH employees by providing equipment or subsidies for home office improvements.

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## **Proactive Mental Health Screening Helps Identify Risk and Improves Connection to Care**

[JOEM](#)

A large, national health services company tested a workplace program that screened for mental health risks and connected at-risk employees to a care concierge that provided support and referrals to EAPs and providers. While only one in four at-risk employees completed a visit with a care concierge, approximately nine in ten of these employees utilized a recommended source of care. Employees who completed the care concierge visit reported less anxiety symptoms 60 days later. Providing a care concierge service may improve the mental health burden and productivity of employees.

**+ Screenings Present Opportunities for Savings:** IBI's past [study](#) and [webinar](#) on preventive screenings identifies how often patients are missing them and simulates the potential leave cost savings if the screening gaps were closed. It found depression—compared to other chronic illnesses with established screening guidelines—presented the largest opportunity for health and productivity costs savings.

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## **Mobile Health Management Program Involving Friendly Competition Improves Cardiovascular Health**

[JOEM](#)

A randomized trial in South Korea tested an intervention among employees with desk jobs at two small- to medium-sized companies to improve workers' cardiovascular health. Both intervention and control groups participated in the same group exercise program at work, while the intervention group received counseling and education through a 12-week mobile health program involving friendly competition. The intervention group improved their overall cardiovascular-related health behaviors (e.g., diet, physical activity) and lowered their waist circumference, body fat percentage, and triglyceride level. The control group lowered their cholesterol but increased their waist circumference and abdominal fat. Employers could consider a mobile health program that works for their company to potentially improve employee health outcomes.

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## **More Frequent Headaches Related to More Productivity Loss**

### **[Current Medical Research and Opinion](#)**

A study using claims data compared presenteeism and absenteeism among employees who received medical care or prescriptions for migraine. Compared to employees with fewer than four headaches in the past 30 days, employees with four or more headaches reported about 10% higher rates of presenteeism and overall work impairment. They also missed nearly 75% more days of work over the past six months (6.2 vs. 3.5 days), but the difference was not statistically significant. Employees with more frequent headaches also had more chronic comorbidities, including allergies, anxiety, chronic pain, cluster headaches, constipation, depression, and fibromyalgia, and scored lower on a measure tied to health-related quality of life. Ensuring access to effective migraine treatment may result in improved productivity of employees with frequent headaches. Considering approximately 12% of the US population suffers from migraines, this could result in substantial business performance gains.

**+ Health and Productivity Impact of Migraines:** According to IBI's [disability diagnosis analyzer tool](#), there are 12,000 disability claims filed for migraines each year with each claim costing employers \$5,000 and taking employees off the job for more than two months.

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## **Parents of Children Going to School Online During COVID-19 Have Worse Mental Health Outcomes**

### **[MMWR](#)**

CDC researchers utilized the COVID Experiences survey to better understand the implications of school disruptions on children and their parents. Parents of children attending school online during COVID-19 were 40% more likely to report work loss, 60% more likely to report job stability concerns, 70% more likely to experience childcare challenges, 50% more likely to experience conflict between working and providing childcare, and 40% more likely to experience at least moderate distress than parents whose children were going to school in-person. The authors conclude that parents of children who are receiving virtual instruction may benefit from mental health services and additional support to manage stress.

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## Investigation into the Lost Productivity Costs for Multiple Sclerosis Patients with Disease Modifying Therapies

[Pharmacoeconomics](#)

Compared to a statistically similar (matched) cohort of employees, patients with disease modifying therapies (DMT) for multiple sclerosis (MS) experienced 40% more absence hours and had six times higher short- and long-term disability leave costs. This suggests the high productivity burden of MS. Compared to long-term disability claimants with injectable DMTs, oral DMT users had significantly lower claim costs. The authors conclude that open access to oral DMTs may lower the disability cost burden of MS.



### **HEALTH AND PRODUCTIVITY AT WORK**

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**June 23, 2021:** - [PBGH/ IBI Information or Overload? Meaningful Employer Data](#)

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