

RESEARCH REVIEW

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Health Care Costs Associated with Air Pollution are 40% Higher than Previously Estimated

[Health Affairs](#)

Current estimates of the economic impact of air pollution are limited to health care costs from hospital admissions and emergency room visits for cardiovascular or respiratory disease. A recent study took a more comprehensive view, incorporating costs for ambulatory care such as prior or follow-up care, treatment, and lost work time, to find that for each dollar of health care costs previously associated with air pollution, an additional 40 cents needed to be added for a more accurate accounting. Previous estimates underreported the total costs of respiratory events attributed to air pollution by 43.2%, and by 41.7% and 35.1% for cardiovascular events of patients under 65 and over 65, respectively. Lost work

time estimates were also found to be underreported by over 40% indicating that the business impact of air pollution is larger than anticipated. Employers have a stake in [tackling air pollution](#) as its toll extends well into the health and productivity of their employers.

+ Protecting Health and Productivity in the Midst of Climate Change: IBI Director, Research & Analytics Brian Gifford, Ph.D. discusses the role health benefits professionals can play as climate change continues to pose an economic threat to employers. Read about it in the [American Journal of Health Promotion](#).

Greater Job Autonomy Reduces Sick Days Taken; Effects Increase with Age

[IZA Institute of Labor Economics](#)

January is Mental Wellness Awareness Month, and a recent study using data from the German Mental Health Mental at Work survey found that job autonomy is protective against sickness-related absences – and this effect gets larger as employees age. This complements [past studies](#) that show that employees need some level of control at work to feel productive, satisfied, and healthy. Providing ways for employees to manage their work with greater autonomy has the added benefits of not only reducing work strain but also decreasing sick leave taken. Strategies for increasing job autonomy include self-managed working time arrangements, group work, and self-determined amount of work and content of work.

New Study Reveals Inequities in Accessing Telemedicine During COVID-19

[JAMA](#)

Telemedicine use has grown exponentially during the pandemic, but researchers examined nearly 150,000 patient cases to find large population differences in the adoption of virtual care. Patients older than 55, Asian, white, without comorbidities, male, on Medicaid or were non-English speaking had lower rates of telemedicine use. In addition, certain groups were less likely to use video-based telemedicine even if this did not hold true to phone-based telemedicine. These groups included patients who were older, female, Black, Latinx, or of lower socioeconomic status. The findings call for implementation of strategies to ensure more equitable access to telemedicine during this time.

Correlation Present between Presenteeism and Several Health- and Work-Related Factors

Occupational Medicine

An analysis of nearly 3,000 employees at a Japanese company — where the majority were over 40 and male — found that 59% were at high risk of presenteeism. Researchers found employees with lower risk of presenteeism were female, older, and had higher self-reported health status. Those with increased workplace support, decreased job demands, less overtime hours, or a high sense of job control also were at lower risk of presenteeism. Employees with high health literacy, or the ability to obtain, process, and understand health information to make appropriate decisions about their health, also were less likely to experience presenteeism. Findings suggest that workplace environment affects employee health and productivity. Employers can reduce presenteeism by improving accommodations (workplace support programs, job demands, and job autonomy), health literacy, and the number of overtime hours.

Increased Health Care Utilization and Costs Among Patients with Endometriosis with High-Risk or Chronic Opioid Use

Women's Health

An analysis of medical and pharmaceutical claims reviewed the health care utilization and costs associated with opioid use among more than 60,000 female patients with endometriosis. Among all-causes, health care utilization and costs were significantly higher across all measures including outpatient, ER, inpatient, length of stay and pharmacy fills when high-risk or chronic opioid usage was present. For example, all-cause costs were 71% higher per patient among chronic opioid users compared to non-chronic users, and 25% higher for high-risk compared to low-risk users. Similar trends were seen — except for pharmacy fills — specific to their endometriosis diagnosis. Since pain management is likely ongoing for this population, health care utilization and costs are expected to rise as women with endometriosis will have a continued need for chronic disease management.

+ Productivity Impact of Opioid Use in the Workplace: IBI's [research](#) found that employees who took pain relievers — regardless of whether they used the medication as directed or showed signs of problematic use — were found to be absent from work more than twice as often as employees who did not use them. In terms of lost work time, this equates to at least a 1.25 extra lost workday per month than non-users. Employers should ensure their health programs

include [effective pain management approaches](#) that meet their workforces needs.

Gap Exists between Desired Support for Vaping Cessation and Current Programs Offered by Employers

[JOEM](#)

Among 1,607 full-time employees, two in five were current users of cigarettes and/or vaping devices. Nearly half of these users reported that vaping in the workplace was a trigger for them, with dual users being the most impacted. Approximately one in three employees with a child who vapes reported experiencing presenteeism or absenteeism because of their children's nicotine use. While a vast majority of the employees (85%) noted that support to quit vaping was important, only one-third of employees were familiar with these programs at their company. Researchers suggest that cessation program should be reviewed to align with tobacco use and cessation needs as well as include support for parents of vaping children.



HEALTH AND PRODUCTIVITY AT WORK

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Upcoming Events

January 14, 2021: Webinar - [The State of Migraine Disease in the Workplace](#)

February 19, 2021: Webinar Series
- [How Employers Can Address the Impact and Cost of Chronic Conditions Affecting their Workforce](#)

July 29, 2021: Save the Date
- [IBI/GPBCH Data and Analytics Symposium](#)

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