

RESEARCH REVIEW

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

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Emergency Sick Leave Helped Slow the Spread of COVID-19 [Health Affairs](#)

A recent study found that states that gained access to paid leave through the Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA) had 400 fewer COVID-19 cases per day when compared to states where workers already had access to paid sick leave and relative to the period before the FFCRA was enacted. Prior to the pandemic, employees without sick leave were more likely to go to work sick, have financial hardship, skip preventive health care, and spread contagious disease. The findings from this study suggest paid leave may be an effective tool for limiting the spread of disease and protecting public health.

+ Safeguarding Employee Health Saves the Economy: IBI's [research](#) on the disability leave costs and changes associated with COVID-19 was recently highlighted in The Atlantic's "[America Chose Sickness, and Lost the Economy.](#)"

Before COVID-19, Who was Using Telehealth?

[JAMA](#)

A nationally representative survey of over 2,500 Americans in 2019 found that half had reported using at least one method of telehealth (not including the telephone). Telehealth methods commonly used aside from the telephone were patient portals, emails and texts messages. Videoconferencing use, on the other hand, was reported at 4%. Nearly half of respondents reported a willingness to participate in videoconferencing visits with their doctor but some groups reported less use, including those who were older, Black, with less income or had at most a high school education. The most cited reasons for not using videoconferencing included no perceived need, not offered by physician, and not knowing how to use it. Expanding and incentivizing videoconferencing use among certain demographic groups could improve healthcare access, even after the COVID-19 pandemic.

+ Telehealth Trends after COVID-19: [CDC's Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report](#) (MMWR) found that telehealth visits increased by more than 50% during the first three months of 2020 compared to 2019.

Leading Causes of Presenteeism and its Associated Economic Burden in Japan

[JOEM](#)

A survey of 10,000 employees in Japan found that neck pain, low back pain, and mental illness were the most reported health conditions that interfered with work. Mental illness was associated with the highest overall cost—per capita and nationwide—followed by neck pain and low back pain. Researchers also found that when they had symptoms, younger workers had higher levels of presenteeism than older workers.

+ What are the Costs of Presentism in the U.S?: IBI's [Health & Productivity Snapshot](#) tool summarizes the prevalence of chronic health conditions in the workforce and calculates associated lost productivity costs. Members can request reports [here](#).

Predictors of Presenteeism, Absenteeism and Job Loss in Patients Starting Therapies for Rheumatoid Arthritis

[Rheumatology](#)

An analysis of 700 employees with rheumatoid arthritis (RA) who started either methotrexate (which treats the entire immune system) or a biologic (which target specific areas of inflammation) found that over 10% left work during the study period, though those who took a biologic remained at work longer. Psychological distress, smoking, and physical disability predicted leaving work among methotrexate-starters, while physical disability predicted leaving work among biologic starters. Further, 17% of methotrexate-starters and 15% of biologic starters took sick leave — a decline from a baseline of 31% and 26%, respectively. Presenteeism was low across both groups throughout the study. The researchers indicate that improving disease control, addressing work-related issues (e.g., decreasing physical demands), and decreasing fatigue and disability may help keep RA patients employed.

+ Hidden costs of RA: IBI Research Director Brian Gifford [recently discussed](#) employer challenges in managing expenses associated with RA and how effective management of RA can keep employees on the job and reduce lost work time costs.



HEALTH AND PRODUCTIVITY AT WORK

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

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