

RESEARCH REVIEW

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

[NEWSLETTER ARCHIVE >](#)



September 9, 2020

In this issue:

- [Patients Postponed Breast Cancer Care during the COVID-19 Pandemic](#)
- [Growing Portion of Elderly Adults with Disabilities Are Using Informal Care](#)
- [Paid Sick Leave and Sleep: An Analysis of US Adult Workers](#)
- [Prevalence of Work-Related Musculoskeletal Disorders Decreasing](#)
- [Stress from COVID-19 Worsens U.S. Mental Health and Substance Use](#)
- [COVID-19 Has Increased Medicaid Enrollment, but Short-Term Enrollment Changes are Unrelated to Job Losses](#)

Patients Postponed Breast Cancer Care during the COVID-19 Pandemic

[*Breast Cancer Research and Treatment*](#)

A survey of 609 patients who were diagnosed with breast cancer in the last five years found that nearly half of the respondents delayed cancer care during the pandemic. Delays were higher among White and Asian women compared with Black women, and among younger women compared with older women. Delays in treatment for younger women can be problematic as this group is generally at higher risk of mortality than those diagnosed at later ages. However, those who are older are at higher risk of mortality from COVID-19 and more likely to obtain care in a medical setting – increasing their risk of exposure to the virus. Additionally, those with employer-sponsored insurance are at a higher risk of delayed care compared with those who have public insurance.

+ Delayed Care Comes with Productivity Costs: IBI conducted research to investigate the business implications of preventive screenings and found that

gaps in screenings will have an impact on healthcare and productivity costs. Register for [today's webinar](#) at 1pm ET/10 am PT to learn more and hear from an employer about their screening initiatives and guidance on closing the gap on screenings during the pandemic.

+ Oncology World Has Been Shaken Up: Further commentaries discuss the [disruption of cancer care](#) and [considerations for the healthcare field](#) to avoid future public health crises.

Growing Portion of Elderly Adults with Disabilities Are Using Informal Care

[Health Affairs](#)

While formal home care increased considerably among elderly adults 65 years and older who were not able to perform at least two daily or household activities (e.g., feeding, bathing, managing finances, housework) as a proxy for disability, it did not replace informal home care, which also increased. In fact, there was an increase in the prevalence of elderly adults who received both formal and informal care within their home (24% in 2004 to 29% in 2016). Researchers expressed concern on the increase in informal care, which could result in increased caregiver strain and leave from the workforce.

+ Strained Caregivers, Strained Workforce: [IBI's research](#) found that caregiving burden interferes with work in different ways, and while leave policies may give employee caregivers the flexibility to take time to provide informal care, it does not reduce the [caregiving burden or productivity impacts](#) at work.

Paid Sick Leave and Sleep: An Analysis of US Adult Workers

[JOEM](#)

Just over half of working adults (63%) report getting adequate sleep. Employees without paid leave are more likely to report having trouble staying asleep. This could be related to increased worry and psychological distress which interferes with sleep. However, those with paid sick leave are less likely to report feeling rested over the past week. This may be related to greater work responsibility as employees with paid sick leave are more likely to have professional jobs and work more hours. Past research has found that poor sleep is predictive of poor productivity at work, so it is important to understand how improving the quality of

sleep for employees may yield benefits for business as well.

+ More Sleep, More Productivity: Research around cognitive behavioral therapy has found that it is an effective treatment for insomnia. A [study](#) looked into its effect on work outcomes and found that cognitive behavioral therapy for insomnia improves work productivity and activity levels particularly for individuals who are relieved of their insomnia.

Prevalence of Work-Related Musculoskeletal Disorders Decreasing

[JOEM](#)

From 2002 to 2014, the prevalence of back and arm pain reported in the workforce decreased overall by nearly 5%. Pain symptoms did not differ by occupation in 2014, and manual labor occupations of construction and extraction did not have a significant decrease in pain. Back and arm pain were associated with work injuries, heavy lifting, and hand movement (repeated or stressful hand movements or awkward postures) throughout the years. Several organization factors, such as working mandatory extra hours, work stress, not enough time to complete work, decreased supervisor support, decreased job satisfaction, and poor climate of safety were also associated with back and arm pain. Having the freedom to decide how to do one's own work played a protective role from arm pain.

+ Back at Work: A [study](#) investigated how workplace changes impact musculoskeletal conditions. It also reviewed prevention measures including policies on safety, health, disability, and diversity as well as future research measures that are needed to keep employees healthy and in the workforce.

Stress from COVID-19 Worsens U.S. Mental Health and Substance Use

[Kaiser Family Foundation](#)

Results from a Kaiser Family Foundation poll of U.S. adults found that stress from the COVID-19 pandemic negatively affected respondents' sleep, eating, substance use, and chronic conditions. In addition, the proportion of people reporting that their mental health was negatively affected rose from 32% to 53% between March to July. Adults who have lost jobs, lower incomes, children, or

were already suffering from mental or physical illness were more likely to report adverse mental health outcomes. Prior research has shown that psychological distress can last for up to three years after an outbreak. Providing resources to manage mental health now may better equip individuals for recovery after the pandemic. Expanding mental health services and waiving the costs of such services can reduce barriers and encourage those suffering to seek and obtain help.

+ Additional information: A [commentary](#) provides additional considerations for addressing mental health during disasters and reinforces the negative mental health consequences of shelter in place policies, especially with no clearly defined timeline and poor or conflicting messaging. Potential mitigation strategies are also discussed.

COVID-19 Has Increased Medicaid Enrollment, but Short-Term Enrollment Changes are Unrelated to Job Losses

[Health Affairs](#)

Between March and June 2020, the number of people enrolled in total Medicaid across 26 states with data increased by 1.7 million. However, despite an increase in both unemployment and Medicaid coverage during this period, there was no association between job loss and enrollment in Medicaid. Researchers theorize that many furloughed and laid-off employees have been able to keep employee-sponsored benefits or switched to COBRA. However, these may be temporary solutions before former employees turn to Medicaid enrollment in the near future.



HEALTH AND PRODUCTIVITY AT WORK

For more information, please visit www.ibiweb.org.

Upcoming Events

TODAY September 9: [Webinar - Closing the Gap on Preventive Screenings](#)

September 14-October 1: [Conference - Health and Productivity Forum \(Virtual\)](#)

Copyright © 2020, All rights reserved.

Integrated Benefits Institute

1901 Harrison Street, Suite 1100

Oakland California, 94612

[Forward to a Colleague](#)

[Update your email preferences or unsubscribe](#)