



AMERICAN COLLEGE OF  
OCCUPATIONAL AND  
ENVIRONMENTAL MEDICINE



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## **National Summit Urges Action to Improve Workforce Health and Productivity**

### ***Private and public sector leaders issue recommendations; focus on prevention and health promotion***

(Elk Grove Village, IL – November 25, 2008) A group of more than 30 national experts in workforce health and productivity issued a call for action today to U.S. employers, urging them to adopt health prevention measures for their employees to avert the “dire consequences” of chronic disease and changing demographic trends in the workplace.

As a follow-up to its first-ever Workforce Health and Productivity Summit, held earlier this month in Santa Ana Pueblo, New Mexico, the group has issued [10 consensus statements](#), accompanied by a list of recommendations intended to enhance worker health, strengthen the health care system, and benefit the nation’s economy by focusing attention on the unique relationship between workforce health and productivity. The event was organized by the American College of Occupational and Environmental Medicine (ACOEM) and the Integrated Benefits Institute (IBI), with funding by sanofi-aventis.

Summit participants, representing employers, physicians and health care providers, consumers, academia, and government, engaged in two days of intense discussions, concluding that urgent action is needed to shift the nation’s employers to a more proactive and preventive approach to workforce health.

Among the group’s conclusions: Not enough employers are familiar with the fundamental linkage between health and productivity, nor are they utilizing the many resources and tools already available to help build a healthier workforce. A more consistent system of workforce health measurement is needed and the nation’s employees must be engaged with employers as partners in a system-wide effort to improve health. The group called for a number of action steps, including an effort to include workforce health policy as a fundamental part of the health care system reform debate.

“The resounding consensus from the summit is that staying with the status quo of our current health strategies in the workplace is not an option,” said Ron Loeppke, MD, MPH, co-chair of the ACOEM Section on Health and Productivity and one of the event’s coordinators. “With a growing economic burden of health conditions and health risks in the workforce and an increasingly competitive global marketplace, we need to focus urgently on steps that can be taken to improve overall health and productivity in the workplace. The clock is ticking – for both the health of our workers and the health of our economy.”

Formal consensus statements and recommendations from the group are available on the ACOEM [web site](#). A more detailed report of the summit proceedings will be distributed in early 2009.

ACOEM and IBI cite the aging American workforce and the rise of chronic health conditions among all workers as key factors driving the need for adoption of health and productivity strategies aimed at the workforce. Some studies suggest that more than 80 percent of medical spending goes toward care for chronic conditions, such as diabetes, depression, and cancer.

When an employer's medical and pharmacy costs are added to health-related productivity losses such as absenteeism and presenteeism (a situation in which employees are on the job, but not fully productive due to a health condition), the average estimated full-cost impact in the United States is nearly \$13,000 per employee. Using U.S. Department of Labor statistics showing approximately 137 million non-farm employees in the United States, the overall annual cost impact on the workplace is an estimated \$1.7 trillion.

Health and productivity tools measure workforce health and productivity levels to determine full health-related costs, including the impact of specific health conditions on productivity. This allows employers to design integrated prevention and intervention programs to address their unique needs. Innovative employers use integrated health strategies to lower risks among employees, reduce the burden of illness and health-related costs, and improve productivity as well as the quality of life for workers.

To learn more about the Workforce Health Summit, call 847-475-1283. To learn more about other health and productivity initiatives by ACOEM and IBI, visit [www.acoem.org](http://www.acoem.org) or [www.ibiweb.org](http://www.ibiweb.org).

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### **About ACOEM**

The American College of Occupational and Environmental Medicine (ACOEM) represents nearly 5,000 physicians specializing in occupational and environmental medicine. Founded in 1916, ACOEM is the nation's largest medical society dedicated to promoting the health of workers through preventive medicine, clinical care, disability management, research, and education. For more information, visit [www.acoem.org](http://www.acoem.org).

### **About IBI**

IBI provides employers and their supplier partners with resources for proving the business value of health. A nonprofit supplier of health and productivity research, measurement and benchmarking, IBI's programs, resources and expert networks advance understanding about the link between – and the impact of – health-related productivity on corporate profitability. For more information, visit [www.ibiweb.org](http://www.ibiweb.org).

### **About sanofi-aventis**

Sanofi-aventis is a global pharmaceutical company that discovers, develops, produces and markets innovative therapies that enhance people's lives. Its research and development efforts are focused on health care challenges in cardiology, oncology and internal medicine, as well as metabolic diseases, central nervous system disorders and vaccines. For more information, visit [www.sanofi-aventis.com](http://www.sanofi-aventis.com).

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