



Partner Research

## **New IBI Partner Research Examines Impacts of Medication Adherence, Multiple Chronic Diseases and Health Risks on Productivity in the Workplace**

New research published in the June 2011 *Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine* assists employers by identifying important elements of an effective workforce health and productivity program.

The partner report, coauthored by IBI with the American College of Occupational and Environmental Medicine and Alere Health, explored the relationship between medication adherence and other health factors, such as co-morbidity (the presence of multiple chronic diseases) and multiple health risks. The National Pharmaceutical Council funded the research.

Among the study's conclusions: Even for a population of employees receiving disease- and medication-management services and who were largely compliant in filling their prescriptions, the relative presence of health risk factors is a significant predictor of job performance, while co-morbidity – the presence of more than one chronic disease – is associated with absence.

The research involved more than 64,000 employees with chronic health conditions, spread across five employers, and is one of the largest of its kind. It is a follow-up to a landmark study by the same researchers in 2009 titled "Health and Productivity as a Business Strategy." The original study found that employers' health-related productivity costs for chronic diseases are significantly higher than their medical and pharmacy costs and noted the need to look more closely at the effects of co-morbid conditions.

The authors recommend that a workforce integrated health and productivity management strategy should, in addition to such tertiary prevention methods as disease- and medication-management services, be supplemented by primary and secondary prevention programs, such as wellness and screening services. This means that while medication adherence is important in disease management, employers should think of it as just one of *multiple* components they should include.

In their analysis researchers found that for this medication-adherent population, a high number of health risks is a significant predictor of lower job performance across all the medical conditions studied. Co-morbidity was a marker for absence in five of the nine conditions.

Ron Loeppke, MD, MPH, FACOEM, vice president of the American College of Occupational and Environmental Medicine and the lead investigator of the study, noted, "Employers should understand that every individual presents a unique combination of health risks and co-morbidities, and they should be wary of focusing on single diseases or one-dimensional approaches as they assess worker health."

Thomas Parry, Ph.D., president of IBI, noted: "While the cost and impact on productivity from chronic disease continues to rise in the workplace, it's important to remember that many chronic health conditions are preventable. That's why continued research and better understanding of chronic conditions are essential to workplace productivity, and why prevention should be a foundational underpinning of our national efforts aimed at this problem."

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