Key Learnings

- Changes in reported presenteeism were significantly associated with changes in numbers of health risks among Australian employees.
- On average, each risk factor increased or reduced over time was associated with a change of 4.2 percentage points in presenteeism.
- Although not reaching statistical significance levels, there was a trend for changes in annual payroll illness absenteeism also to follow changes in numbers of health risks.

Changes in presenteeism were assessed using health risk appraisals (HRAs; 2004-2005) to evaluate the impact of changes in numbers of individual health risks (resulting from a targeted onsite health promotion intervention) on changes in two productivity measures (2004-2005): self-reported presenteeism (subjective measure) and payroll illness absenteeism (objective measure). 35% of 2004 HRA participants (N=224; 81% female, average age 34 years) completed a follow-up HRA in 2005 (N=77; 77% female, average age 37 years).

Changes in percentages of presenteeism (work impairment) were significantly associated with changes in numbers of health risks—health risks decreased, presenteeism decreased; as health risks increased, presenteeism increased. On average, each risk factor increased or decreased over time was associated with an incremental change of 4.2 percentage points of presenteeism. Although there was a similar trend for changes in payroll illness absenteeism to follow changes in health risks, the differences were not statistically significant.

These results are an intervention case study on a small study population documenting the experience of one employer in the Australian environment and may not be generalizable to other settings. That the presenteeism changes, however, were similar to results previously published in the U.S. (Burton et al., JOMH 2004) adds credibility to the robustness of the relationship between changes in productivity measures and changes in health risk status.

Reference: