ACADEMY BRIEFS

THE ASSOCIATION BETWEEN HEALTH RISK CHANGE AND PRESENTEEISM CHANGE

Increases and decreases in health risks are associated with increases and decreases in presenteeism

Using results from the WLQ-Work Limitations Questionnaire (shortform), 1.9% excess loss of productivity was associated with each changed health risk factor over time – equivalent to $950 per year per risk changed.

This study used an eight-question short-form version of the Work Limitations Questionnaire (WLQ) incorporated into a standard Health Risk Appraisal (HRA) to measure changes in productivity loss and changes in health risks in a large financial institution employee population.

The study population was required to participate in two HRAs in 2002 and 2004 (N=7,026; participation rate of 10% of eligible population).

Individuals who reduced their risks experienced an improvement in productivity, whereas those who gained risks or remained high-risk experienced deterioration in productivity.

Each risk factor increased or reduced was associated with a commensurate change of 1.9% productivity loss over time (adjusted for age, gender, health risks, medical conditions and baseline productivity loss). This change in productivity was estimated to be $950 per year per risk changed.

Considering the number of individuals with “any” productivity loss, overall, each risk change (positive or negative) equaled a 5.8% change in the percent of people reporting any productivity loss (adjusted for age, gender, health risks, medical conditions and baseline productivity loss).

Both versions of the productivity metric (average productivity loss and any productivity loss) showed significant linear trends of changed productivity associated with changes in health risks. Risk change and changes in productivity were thus demonstrated to be strongly associated and to change in the same direction – productivity loss increased as health risks increased and productivity loss decreased as health risks decreased.


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