

Employee Health and Presenteeism: A Systematic Review.

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INTRODUCTION: Many employers focus on their large and easily measured cost of health care, yet until recently they have ignored the impact of health on productivity. Studies of some chronic conditions and some health risk factors suggest that costs of lost productivity exceed costs of medical care. This review will examine the literature to explore the link between employee health and on-the-job productivity, also known as presenteeism. **METHODS:** Searches of Medline, CINAHL and PubMed were conducted in October 2006, with no starting date limitation with "presenteeism" or "work limitations" as keywords. A total of 113 studies were found using this method. Each study was evaluated based on the strength of the study design, statistical analyses, outcome measurement, and controlling of confounding variables. **RESULTS:** Literature on presenteeism has investigated its link with a large number of health risks and health conditions ranging from exercise and weight to allergies and irritable bowel syndrome. As expected, the research on some topic areas is stronger than others.

CONCLUSIONS: Based on the research reviewed here, it can be said with confidence that health conditions such as allergies and arthritis are associated with presenteeism. Moreover, health risks traditionally measured by a health risk appraisal (HRA), especially physical activity and body weight, also show an association with presenteeism. The next step for researchers is to tease out the impact of individual health risks or combinations of risks and health conditions on this important outcome measure.