INFLUENCING FACTORS OF LONG-TERM ABSENTEEISM: A CROSS-SECTIONAL STUDY AMONG BELGIAN EMPLOYEES

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Introduction The increase in long-term (>1 month) absenteeism is a major challenge for Belgian companies. Over the last 10 years, long-term absenteeism increased from 3.1% to 5.13%. Consequently, absenteeism has become a key element in the human resource management strategy of many organisations. The aim of this study was to assess factors influencing long-term absenteeism among employees.

Methods A questionnaire was developed by a team of experts in the field of occupational health, to assess factors influencing long-term absenteeism. The questionnaire comprised 28 items covering four main topics: employee characteristics (e.g., age), absenteeism (e.g., absenteeism rate, causes of absenteeism), work-related features (e.g., employment satisfaction, stressors, social support, job control), and lifestyle (e.g., smoking). Employees were invited to fill out the questionnaire online by their employee organisations in Belgium.

Results From January to March 2017, a total of 1913 employees (50.2% male, 49.8% female) filled out the questionnaire. The survey revealed that over the last year, about one out of five of the respondents had been on unscheduled sick leave for at least two weeks. Almost 10% of the respondents considered themselves at risk for sick-leave ≥ 1 month during the next year. Of these, 53% believed that physical reasons would be the cause for the absence, and 38% cited psychological reasons.

The following variables were found to be positively associated (p<0.05) with long-term absenteeism: type of work (physical work), seniority at work, and low social support from family and friends. On the other hand, job satisfaction (physical work), seniority at work, and low social support were found to be negatively associated (p<0.05) with long-term absenteeism.

Discussion The results of this study present insights into factors associated with the risk of long-term absenteeism. They provide a starting point for actions both at an organisational and individual level targeted at reducing and preventing long-term absenteeism.

HEALTH CHECKS AT THE WORKPLACE

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BASF SE in Ludwigshafen has approximately 36 000 employees who receive occupational medical support from the Corporate Health Management Department. As part of demography management health checks for early recognition of chronic diseases were introduced for all employees in 2011 in addition to obligatory occupational medical prevention. Regardless the risk potential at the workstation each employee has the opportunity to make use of a health check every three years. Depending on the diagnosis, a medical recommendation is given to visit an external consulting physician or to take part in health promoting activities offered within the company. A computerised invitation procedure similar to that used in cancer prevention makes sure that entitled employees use the health check regularly.

Methods The BASF health check includes an extensive laboratory test, various technical tests such as spirometry, ECG, audiometry and eye test. Work ability index, WAI, psychological stress, pre-existing conditions and the risk profile for diabetes (Find Risk questionnaire) and heart attacks (Procam score) are captured in a questionnaire. Module recommendations on the topics of ‘nutrition and exercise’, ‘daily strain and strain caused by stress’, ‘musculoskeletal disorders’ and ‘smoking cessation’ are given based on a stored algorithm. Furthermore, individual reports about the results are elaborated by the occupational health physicians. If severe conditions at an early stage are recognised, recommendations are given to visit a primary care physician.

Results From November 1, 2011 until December 31, 2014 18 140 employees made use of the offer of a health check (a participation rate of 45.3%). In accordance with the gender distribution within BASF 80.3% of the male employees and
19.7% of the female employees participated. The average age among the men was 45, and 39 among the women. 42% of industrial employees, 36% of employees under a collective agreement and 21% of employees not under a collective agreement participated. In recent diagnoses musculoskeletal condition were leading. The BMI becomes higher with increasing age, showing 23.2% of employees older than 50 a value of over 30. Accordingly, in 20.4% of employees older than 50 a prediabetes with an HbA1C between 5.7% and 6.4% could be determined. The percentage of diabetics with an HbA1C value over or equal to 6.5% was at 4.3%. Module recommendations with respect to health promoting measures were given in 60% of the cases.

**Discussion** Almost 50% of the employees well accept health checks for early recognition of chronic and lifestyle conditions. The proportion of 30 to 60 year olds and the proportion of men were the highest. In comparison to external health checks especially industrial employees are reached, being newly diagnosed as Chronic and lifestyle conditions. Module recommendations with respect to health promoting measures were given in 60% of the cases.

**Results** 6 Year Aggregate (2009 through 2015): Unilever-Singapore healthcare cost return-on-investment (ROI) for the participant sample over the span of 6 periods was found to be 1.72: 1. When looking at the ROI for productivity the ratio is 0.48: 1 for absenteeism, and 1.30: 1 for presentism. When healthcare and productivity savings are combined the ratio is 3.50: 1.

**Discussion** The Unilever Singapore program came into existence in 2009. Since then we have been able to demonstrate reduction in the prevalence of health risk factors while also showing a positive Return on Investment over the 6 year period. The findings indicate that our program is heading in the right direction and showing a positive impact on employee health and related health costs.

**Abstracts**

361 IMPACT OF TARGETED INTERVENTION PROGRAMS WITH A HOLISTIC APPROACH TO IMPROVE THE HEALTH RISK PARAMETERS OF INDIAN WORKERS

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Introduction Increasing incomes and sedentary lifestyles have led to changes in food habits resulting in increasing trends of obesity and NCD’s among workers. As simple disease awareness programs seemed ineffective in bringing about lifestyle modifications, a holistic approach to health was conceptualised by the Siemens India Health Management Team to improve the health risk parameters of workers and prevent future complications.

Methods Targeted intervention programs over 3 month duration each have been initiated since October 2015. The first FIT4LIFE Program had 50 identified Pre-Diabetic employees who had access to weekly Dietician consultation; Yoga sessions with emphasis on relaxation techniques and short modules for daily practice; and, daily walking 10 000 steps with a mobile Pedometer App. Stress Management sessions by EAP counselors helped increase psychosocial health awareness and its connection to lifestyle disorders. Mobile phone application was effectively used to provide motivation and positive reinforcement to the group. Baseline and final assessment data were analysed using paired t-test.

Results At the end of the first program, participants categorised under high risk for diabetes were found to have reduced their weight and a 26% reduction of HbA1c levels was achieved. It was demonstrated that 20% participants achieved weight loss between 5 kg to 9.6 kg and 30% participants achieved weight loss between 2 kg to 4.9 kg. During Final Assessment, all except 2 participants demonstrated HbA1c reduction as compared to baseline assessment stage.

Paired t-test was applied and P value was found to be statistically significant for 6 of the 8 parameters applied to the first group of 42 who completed the 3 month program.

Discussion The positive findings and success of the first FIT4LIFE Program has motivated the Siemens India Health Management Team to replicate the Program across its multiple locations covering over 500 workers in the last 18 months, thus creating a sustainable positive health impact.

38 PHYSICAL FITNESS ASSESSMENT FOR PREVENTING ACCIDENT AT WORK IN ENERGY INDUSTRY WORKERS

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Introduction Physical fitness could be used to predict the prevalence of accident at work. It could be suggested that healthy employees suffer fewer accidents. The objective was to assess...