



Events

Cancer Presents Complex Workplace Challenges—According to IBI Research

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Cancer Presents Complex Workplace Challenges— Typically Costs Employers \$19,000+ Annually Per 100 Employees

San Francisco, CA –March 26, 2014 – The American Cancer Society estimates that more than 1.6 million Americans were diagnosed with cancer in 2013. In addition to its human toll, cancer in the workforce presents complex challenges for employers in balancing workplace privacy and accommodations, according to the Integrated Benefits Institute. The [Integrated Benefits Institute](#) (IBI) is the leading workforce health and productivity research and measurement organization.

Cancer typically costs employers about \$19,000 annually per 100 employees in lost work time and medical treatments. Lost work time and underperformance at work (presenteeism) due to cancer costs employers \$10,000 per 100 workers—more than half of the total costs associated with cancer—and medical and pharmacy treatments cost about \$9,100. Employees with cancer are absent 3.8 more days per year than workers without cancer, and also lose the equivalent of 1.8 more days per year to presenteeism.

At any given time, about one fourth of employees with a history of cancer are in treatment. Employees with cancer have an average of approximately four other conditions that complicate care management strategies. In terms of their impact on productivity, the most serious co-morbid conditions are: depression (16% of employees with cancer), chronic fatigue (22%), obesity (19%), anxiety (14%), chronic back or neck pain (23%), high cholesterol (30%) and hypertension (24%).

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This research is part of the IBI's Chronic Disease Profiles series. The IBI's Chronic Disease Profile series highlights the prevalence, full costs, co-morbidities and intervention approaches for key chronic health conditions. The full report may be accessed at <http://www.ibiweb.org/research-resources/detail/chronic-disease-profile-cancer/public>.

"Cancers present complex challenges for the workplace. At a basic, human level, a cancer diagnosis is a frightening, sometimes emotionally devastating, event. It is natural that co-workers and supervisors will want to provide support to a friend and colleague when told he or she has cancer. At the same time, balancing privacy and workplace accommodation is a critical, but sensitive, issue. Many employees with cancer will frequently feel too sick to work, while others report that remaining on the job keeps them 'connected' and provides a sense of routine as they undergo treatment," said IBI President Tom Parry, PhD.

"Chronic Disease Profiles: Cancer":<http://www.ibiweb.org/research-resources/detail/chronic-disease-profile-cancer/public> identifies the advantages of workplace-based cancer screening and job accommodations:

- Compliance rates with cancer screening guidelines are highest when there is access through insurance plan coverage.
- Workplace educational programs have been shown to raise awareness of and screening for colorectal cancer.
- Workplace screening for breast cancer reduces lost productivity.
- Employees whose breast cancer was detected early through on-site mammography experienced half as many lost workdays for treatment as employees whose cancer was detected later.
- Providing job accommodations or other workplace stay-at-work or return-to-work opportunities has been shown to help employees with cancer remain on the job.

The report reiterates that "supervisors may not be fully aware of an employee's capabilities or of the organization's responsibilities under the law. Fortunately, many employers provide wellness and disease management benefits that can promote healthy lifestyles, and facilitate early detection and prompt treatment. This not only helps preserve quality of life for people with cancer, but also reduces the social and organizational costs of cancers in the workforce."

According to the American Cancer Society, there were about 524 new cancer cases per 100,000 people in the U.S. in 2013. Rates for specific diseases ranged from about 12 per 100,000 for oral cancers to about 107 per 100,000 for genitourinary cancers (e.g., prostate, uterine).

While some people have a genetic predisposition toward cancer, external factors also play a role. Exposure to certain chemicals and radiation are

known to increase the risk of cancer, as are infectious agents such as hepatitis B and C, and human papillomavirus.

Additionally, as documented in the IBI report, tobacco use is a well-known cause of cancer, as are other unhealthy behaviors, such as heavy use of alcohol, poor nutrition, physical inactivity and unhealthy body weight.

About the Integrated Benefits Institute

The Integrated Benefits Institute (IBI), an independent nonprofit membership organization, is the leading provider of health and productivity research, measurement and benchmarking. Founded in 1995, IBI provides members with data, research and tools to make sound decisions in how they invest in the health of their workforces. Its 940+ members include companies implementing health-related programs to benefit their employees and business, and providers of health and productivity services. Additional information about IBI may be found at www.ibiweb.org.

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