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CANADA

Employees more aware of workplace presenteeism than employers

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Canadian workers are more likely to see presenteeism as a serious issue than employers, finds a Morneau Shepell report.

The majority of employees (53%) indicated that presenteeism is a serious issue in their workplace, versus 32% of employers. Employees are also more likely to see presenteeism as a more serious issue in their workplace than absenteeism, while employers are more likely to see the reverse. More than half of employers (52%) see absenteeism as a serious issue in their workplace compared to 43% of employees.

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“Despite reports of the multi-billion-dollar impact of employee absenteeism on the Canadian economy, as well as evidence of the mitigating effect of integrated absence management strategies, many employers may be unaware of the extent and causes of presenteeism and absenteeism issues within their own organization,” says Paula Allen, vice-president of research and integrative solutions at Morneau Shepell.

Eight out of 10 employee respondents self-reported experience with presenteeism, with 81% indicating that they have gone into work while they were not able to perform as well as they would have liked.

When asked why, 47% indicated that physical sickness played a role, followed closely by stress/anxiety (40%). Almost one in four (22%) blamed issues with their work/workplace or co-workers/managers and 15% specified depression.

Read: [Addressing the presenteeism issue](#)

The report also finds there are different workplace factors that can predict the reason for absenteeism, be it illness or non-illness related.

When asked to identify the reason for their last absence, the majority of employees (52%) indicated the reason was not related to illness. Those employees who indicated a non-illness related reason were more likely to report both higher work-related stress and lower levels of support from their organization for mental wellness.

Interestingly, illness-related absence was more likely for employees who reported that absence was a serious issue in their workplace.

Read: [Absenteeism costs Canadian firms billions](#)

“This essentially indicates these employees perceive a culture of unmanaged absenteeism, which could cause strain in the workplace and take a toll on employee health,” she suggests.

On the presenteeism side of the equation, the report finds that presenteeism can also be predicted by higher levels of reported work-related stress.

“Our research findings suggest that employee absenteeism is not random, meaning that predictors of both illness and non-illness related absence can be influenced by an employer,” Allen says. “What this means is that employers have a tremendous opportunity to influence absenteeism in their workplaces, and ultimately improve the health, well-being and productivity of their organization.”

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