Mental Health & the Workplace

Investing in your staff is the right thing to do

While mental illness has long been recognized for its impact on individuals and families, society is just beginning to understand its impact on the workplace and our economy.

Like any other illness such as a heart condition, left untreated, mental health issues can impact a person’s work performance and a company’s bottom line. Did you know mental health claims (especially depression) have overtaken cardiovascular disease as the fastest growing category of disability costs in Canada?

By far the biggest impact on the workplace is felt through an employee’s reduced productivity. An employee who is suffering from depression or some other mental illness may miss work more often or may struggle to meet deadlines.

If they feel stuck or unhappy, this could lead to chronic stress or depression. According to the Canadian Mental Health Association, employees with untreated mental illness have higher rates of absenteeism and greater utilization of short-term disability benefits.

Curbing the Cost of Mental Illness in Canada -- Source: Global Business and Economic Roundtable of Mental Health

- Annual losses to the Canadian economy due to mental illness in the workplace: $14.4 billion in 1998
- Approximately 75 per cent of short term disability claims are related to mental illness
- Approximately 79 per cent of long-term disability claims are related to mental illness
- Stress and burnout are two reasons why 1 in 12 Canadian employees (a million people) are dissatisfied with their jobs according to a Statscan survey released in 2006

Employers must start thinking about mental health policies and expenditures as an investment in a stable and productive workforce. We all have to move beyond the stereotypes to recognize the valuable skills and abilities of individuals who happen to have mental illness.

How to start improving mental health in the workplace:

- Increase awareness
- Create a stigma/discrimination free work environment
- Offer employee assistance programs
- Try to accommodate the person with mental illness with policies that are supportive

For more information visit www.nsdepression.ca
Workplace Depression

- Depression will rank second only to heart disease as the leading cause of disability worldwide by 2020 (World Health Organization)
- Mental illness claims are rising fastest among major categories of disability insurance (Great West Life/Manulife Financial/RBC)
- An employer can save between $5,000 and $10,000 in average wage replacement, sick leave and prescription drug costs if an employee gets treatment (Global Business and Economic Roundtable on Mental Health)

Depression Creates Moments Like This

Depression is a serious medical condition that affects your mood, body and thoughts. If left untreated, it affects the way a person eats and sleeps and the way they feel about themselves. It is not a passing mood or something that can be wished away.

Each year, 7.5 million Canadians suffer depression, anxiety, substance abuse or some other mental disorder. Depression and anxiety disorders take people off the job more than any other medical condition.

Depression is second only to hypertension as the most common chronic condition encountered by physicians. It can cause decreased productivity, poor concentration or memory, or an increase in errors on the job.

The key element in preventing depression and supporting mental health in the labour force is leadership. Most employers have some method of dealing with Occupational Health and Safety. Some have Employee Assistance Programs. If you don’t have either of these, it’s time to look at your own workplace and the impact of physical and mental health on your business.

Is this an issue you want to address?

Would you prefer a more stable workforce? Are you ready for a collaborative approach to improve issues like absenteeism, conflict and stress leaves? If you’ve answered yes, you just made an investment in your business. We can help. Visit www.nsdepression.ca

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