

[IMAGE]

## **The Prevalence of Pain in the Workplace**

Pain is one of the leading reasons why people are forced to miss time away from work. Pain is also responsible for having a dramatic effect on a person's performance while at work; in fact, a 2003 study found that just four common pain conditions - headaches, back pain, arthritis, and other musculoskeletal problems - account for more than \$62 billion in lost productivity in the U.S. each year. As a result, many companies are seeking for ways to enhance the health of their employees, which can help to reduce pain while improving productivity.

In this study, researchers performed an Internet survey of 1,039 employees at a Fortune 100 company in the northeastern United States. The purpose of the study was to examine the frequency of pain in the average work force, and to measure its impact on employee health and productivity.

Results: Twenty-nine percent of the workers met the study's definition of pain. The five most common health problems reported by workers were allergies, neck pain, low back pain, depression, and arthritis. Employees with pain scored an average of 45 percent lower on an overall rating of physical health, and 23 percent lower on a mental health score, compared to those without pain. Workers with pain were also five times more likely to report being limited in their ability to do their work than employees who were not in pain.

What's interesting to note is that three of the five most common health problems reported in the survey (neck pain, back pain, and arthritis) are musculoskeletal in nature - conditions that can all be managed effectively by a doctor of chiropractic. The authors of the study believe that designing programs that target musculoskeletal conditions will offer companies the biggest "bang for the buck," resulting in a "win-win" situation for all involved.

Allen H, Hubbard D, Sullivan S. The burden of pain on employee health and productivity at a major provider of business services. *Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine*, July 2005;47(7):658-670.

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