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## There's no place like home

By Jodie McLeod, *IPS Worldwide®*



**"A very large part of their life remains concealed and they can become depressed, withdrawn, and anxious."**

After working in a stressful job many people find sanctuary in the comfort of their own homes, but for victims of domestic violence – home is a painful and sometimes life-threatening place.

Managing the demands of work while dealing with the emotional and physical strains of a violent home environment is extremely difficult for victims. Ensuring your workplace provides adequate assistance for employees in this situation is the best means of minimising the impact of domestic violence – both on the sufferer and on the workplace.

#### What is Domestic Violence?

Domestic violence occurs when a family member, partner or ex-partner attempts to physically or psychologically dominate or harm another or others in the family. Domestic violence can be exhibited in many forms, including physical violence, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, intimidation, economic deprivation or threats of violence.

IPS Worldwide® Clinical Manager Jim Jupp says that victims of domestic violence are mostly women, who will also be the focus of this article, but that problems can cross all social boundaries.

"It's not something that happens just in low socio-economic groups," he says. "There's probably a slight tendency for it to be more physical in the lower socio-economic groups and more psychological and probably more devastating in the middle-class groups."

Jupp adds that commonly occurring forms of abuse in middle class groups include intimidation through deprivation of financial resources and emotional abuse. Characteristics of emotional abuse include:

- Being put down in front of children and in social situations
- Not being listened to
- Not being allowed to have an opinion because you're made to feel inferior and unintelligent

#### The impact of domestic violence

Domestic violence directly affects the victims, their children, their families and friends, employers, co-workers, and has repercussions for the local community. For the victim, the abusive relationship contains many complex pulls and pressures that are extremely difficult to break free from. Jupp explains that victims often develop a sense of loyalty to their abuser, which enmeshes them in an ethic of keeping family secrets even though they know they are in a situation that is harmful. This has been labelled the 'battered wife syndrome', where the victimised woman appears to lack the will to leave her abusive partner.

"The traditional view of the 'battered wife syndrome' is in fact still very much alive. The most salient component being, from the observer's point of view, persistence on the part of the victim to stay in the relationship. As well there is the wish fulfilment fantasy that promises to change made by the perpetrator will in fact occur, even in light of repeated broken promises and repeated beatings."

Because of their misjudged concept of family loyalty and keeping of family secrets, Jupp says victims tend not to share in office gossip, and they tend not to be self-revealing to female colleagues about their life because of their shame of being a 'battered wife'. "A very large part of their life remains concealed and they can become depressed, withdrawn, and anxious. Anxious because they're never sure if their

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## From the CEO and Managing Director

This coming August IPS Worldwide® will say farewell to one of our long-standing directors and business partners Vivien Wolff. Vivien has been with the company for sixteen years and has worn many different hats during that time, from administration manager to her current position as Commercial Director and Company Secretary. As well as juggling these different roles in the workplace, Vivien maintained an active life outside of the office – the benefits of which are particularly noticeable as she approaches retirement.

Vivien is planning an active retirement, in which she will embrace her newfound time to pursue longstanding goals and passions not related to work. Unlike so many of us Vivien has continually supplemented her working life with activities like travel, volunteer work and a healthy exercise regime to both keep her fulfilled and prepare herself for the future. Her excellent career planning is a testament to what our organisation stands for – that the challenges of life and work can be integrated with the right support from the workplace and the right outlook from the employee.

Vivien's contribution to IPS Worldwide has been invaluable. We will be sad to see her go but wish her all the best for what we hope will be a long, healthy and happy retirement.

Robin Smith



## NEWS

# Work-life balance arrangements beneficial for all

Flexible working-time arrangements are advantageous for both employers and employees a recent European survey has found. The European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions, a Dublin-based EU agency, conducted research into working time and work-life balance, interviewing employees and managers in 21,000 workplaces across Europe. Reported benefits of flexi-time arrangements included a higher degree of job satisfaction (EU average 63 percent), better adaptation of working hours to the workload (EU 55 percent) and lower absenteeism (EU 26 percent).

While UK private and public organisations were shown to be first-rate in terms of offering flexible working-time arrangements (56 percent) ranking them fourth in Europe behind Latvia, Sweden and Finland, the arrangements themselves were shown to be not as flexible, nor as effective those in the rest of Europe. In comparison to the rest of Europe, the UK reported consistently lower averages on flexi-time benefits. The EU survey was carried out in the 15 old Member States of the European Union (EU15) and in six of the new Member States: the Czech Republic, Cyprus, Latvia, Hungary, Poland and Slovenia.

# Stress at work linked to heart disease

High levels of work-related stress increases the risk of the metabolic syndrome, a condition related to heart disease, obesity and diabetes, recent research has found.

prolonged exposure to work stress affects the nervous system. They also suggested that chronic stress may reduce biological resilience, thus disturbing the body's physiological balance.

Researchers from the University College London monitored over 10,000 men and women working in the London civil service over a 14 year period for the study. Results showed that employees with chronic work stress were more than twice as likely to suffer from the metabolic syndrome than those not suffering work stress. Researchers suggested that possible explanations for the result may be that

Further findings revealed that those in higher status jobs were less likely to develop the syndrome, which supports earlier research that lower social status is linked to higher work stress levels. Furthermore, women experiencing chronic stress were also more likely to develop the syndrome than men.

# New office opens in ACT



IPS Worldwide® has opened a new Regional Centre in the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) to meet the growing demands in the area. Company Director Bruce Parry (pictured right) says that the expansion reflects IPS Worldwide's commitment to continuous improvement of services to clients.

"It's our policy that where there is a need we will provide the facilities to meet that need – no matter whether this is in cities or remote areas," he says. Parry adds that IPS Worldwide's recent relocation of sites in Liverpool and Mascot to bigger offices and the opening of an office in North Ryde again demonstrate the EAP provider's consistency in responding to client demand.

All psychologists in IPS Worldwide® offices are registered psychologists specialising in personal, familial and work-related issues. The number to call to make an appointment is the same for other offices in Australia. Phone 1300 366 789 if in Australia, or +612 9221 1166 if calling from outside Australia.

# Work-life Balance Organisational Self Assessment

by IPS Worldwide®



Companies globally are currently facing a range of human resources challenges, including increased technology in the workplace, changing work practices, women and men entering or returning to work through various life stages, ageing communities, falling fertility rates, different generational approaches to work and life, changing family structures and the continuing 'war for talent'.

Implementing a successful work-life balance program is the most effective way to address these phenomena, and yet many organisations are still unsure about where 'work-life' fits into their overall strategy. In fact, many organisations still have difficulty articulating what 'work-life balance initiatives' involve.

Take a moment to consider your understanding of 'work-life balance initiatives'. Are they just a nice thing to provide employees? Or are they strategic tools that help organisations achieve their business goals? Are you wondering how work-life initiatives can become a part of your business strategy? WorkLife Essentials®, a work-life balance resource and referral service developed by IPS Worldwide® and funded by the IBM Global Work Life Fund, poses the following questions to help you assess the needs of your organisation:

## What is your understanding of 'work-life balance initiatives'?

- Not sure what is meant by 'work-life balance initiatives'
- They're nice things to provide employees but have no real business gain
- We've consulted with employees and think they could be beneficial
- We know the benefits and have begun developing work-life initiatives
- We have a fully integrated and successful work-life program

## What are your desired outcomes of your people strategies?

- Recognition as an Employer of Choice
- Improved employee health & wellbeing
- Attraction & retention of valuable employees
- Reduced absenteeism & turnover
- Alignment of business strategy & work-life policy
- Occupational Health & Safety
- Other .....

## Which of these work-life initiatives are you considering or do you currently have in place?

- Flexible working arrangements
- Employee Assistance Program
- Referral service for childcare and elder care
- Information and educational tools for employees on managing work-life balance
- Work-life leave arrangements
- Other .....

## What is the next step?

- Would immediate access to a suite of practical innovative resources, including a world first in work-life innovations make a difference?

If you answered "Yes" to any of the above questions, we invite you to fax back your self assessment page to +61 (2) 9232 5060, or contact [info@worklifeessentials.com](mailto:info@worklifeessentials.com) to discuss a review of your current initiatives, and find out how WorkLife Essentials' products and services can meet the needs of both your employees and your organisation.

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## There's no place like home

*Continued from page 1*

angry husband will arrive in the workplace and abuse them or what will face them when they get home from work," says Jupp. These and other psychological consequences of domestic violence can also negatively impact on the children of victims, even though the child may not receive abuse directly.

Violence in the home also has a significant bearing on the workplace. In Australia, domestic violence-related absenteeism and replacement costs alone are estimated to cost employers over \$30 million per annum while the total cost to the corporate/business sector is estimated to be around \$1 billion per annum (Impacts and Costs of Domestic Violence on the Australian Business/Corporate Sector, 2000). In highlighting the economic costs of domestic violence, researchers hope to raise awareness and influence legislators and employers to help with the prevention and intervention of domestic violence.

### Psychological consequences of domestic violence

- Anxiety
- Depression
- Alcohol and drug abuse
- Suicide attempts
- Sleep disturbances
- Reduced coping and problem solving skills
- Loss of self-esteem and confidence
- Social isolation
- Fear of starting new relationships
- Living in fear

### Consequences on children of victims

- Emotional and behavioural problems
- Lost school time and poor school performance
- Adjustment problems
- Stress
- Reduced social competence
- Bullying
- Cruelty to animals
- Running away from home
- Relationship problems

Source: Domestic Violence in Australia: an overview of the issues, 2003

### What victims can do

One option for victims of domestic violence is to talk with a counsellor through their employer's Employee Assistance Program (EAP). Talking with a trusted professional like an EAP psychologist can help to change their perspective on their relationship, to recognise its abusive nature and to consider other safer and brighter alternatives. Jupp recommends that counselling be regular and ongoing to help reduce the likelihood of the victim returning to the relationship.

"In essence it's a slow progression out of it. There's massive recidivism even after great effort by the woman to extricate herself from the abusive relationship. Often it takes five or six attempts before she can leave for good," says Jupp.

Many social pressures are applied to women that encourage them to stay in or go back to their situation of jeopardy, which may come from the woman's family or church, or reside in cultural norms. These, combined

with the woman's own wish that her abuser will change their behaviour, make it very difficult for her to leave.

"In terms of counselling the domestically abused wife, one of the most agonising things for the counsellor is [the wife's] inability to accept that past behaviours are likely to predict very, very accurately future behaviours. That is that the abusing husband or partner, despite what they say, is likely to continue to be abusive."

Often the turnaround for a woman comes when she realises her children are not safe while living with the abusive partner. If already in contact with their EAP counsellor, the counsellor will be able to assist the employee to break away from the relationship or more specifically to look for safe houses. Safe houses and women's refuges provide a secure and confidential place for victims of abuse to reside until alternative arrangements are made.

### What managers can do

Most importantly managers should be aware of the signs that one of their employees may be experiencing domestic violence. Signs that employees may be suffering include:

- Dressing differently from other employees, wearing clothing that covers their neck and arms, even in summer when other people are wearing light clothing.
- A pattern of unexplained absences, generally lasting two or three days in order for bruises or injuries to heal.
- A pattern of phone calls during working hours from the employee's partner, which leave the employee after those conversations tearful and upset.

When there is some indication that the employee is in trouble, managers should encourage the employee to seek out help from their EAP.

"Managers might say that they noticed some absences and wondered if there were any problems the employee was experiencing that would be worthwhile talking over with a counsellor," advises Jupp.

As well as directing the employee to safe houses and helping them through the emotional and psychological disturbances, the EAP counsellor can also refer the victim onto the appropriate legal authorities in regards to obtaining a court order of restraint or protection. "This often needs a lot of talking through because even though the person wants to be self-protected they'll be constrained once again by misjudged feelings of loyalty," says Jupp.

In addition to the EAP, Jupp says there is definitely some benefit in employers helping develop general skills of assertiveness in their employees through workshops or seminars available through your EAP provider.

"[Education in the workplace] of the appropriateness of assertive behaviour is likely to generalise to some extent in assisting employees who could be experiencing aggressive behaviour at home."

While government programs and independent organisations take care of preventative and recovery measures for domestic violence such as education, care for victims and therapy for perpetrators, the role of employers and managers is in keeping their employees as safe as possible, which is most effectively achieved through your EAP.

# Is gambling a problem? You bet.

by Bruce Parry, *IPS Worldwide®*

Pathological gambling, like drug and alcohol addiction, affects millions of employees, families, communities and businesses around the world. Yet unlike drug and alcohol addiction, problem gambling often goes largely unnoticed in the public and in the workplace. Problem gambling can have serious implications on workplace morale, productivity, absenteeism and turnover. To avoid these it is important that managers be aware of the signs of gambling addiction and that they understand how to tackle the problem.

## What is problem gambling?

The Public Health Association of Australia defines 'problem gambling' as "a situation when a person's gambling activity gives rise to harm to the individual player, and/or his or her family, and may extend into the community." By this definition, it doesn't take much before a harmless interest in gambling becomes a harmful problem. One big bet could lose a gambler their weekly earnings, throw their family life into turmoil, and the damage can escalate from there.

In Australia an estimated 2.1 percent of the adult population have moderate to severe problems with gambling (Australia's Gambling Industries, 1999), and in Singapore, 58 percent of adults took part in gambling in 2004, with 2.1 percent reporting symptoms of pathological gambling (Ministry of Cultural Development, Youth and Sports, 2005). While the numbers look small, the impact of problem gambling is extensive - spreading beyond the individual to families, friends, communities and the workplace.

## What are the signs of problem gambling in the workplace?

Many gambling addicts are careful to disguise their addiction as a way of denying to themselves and to others that they have a problem. On the surface they appear to be "in control" - there is usually no physical impairment and they are able to convince people around them that everything is fine even when they lose a major bet, or face threats from creditors and even physical intimidation. They become inveterate liars and so skilled at covering their tracks that no one knows they have a secret life.

Problem gamblers can be found in all levels of organisations, including senior positions. In these instances, problems often go on for long periods of time before the catastrophe becomes known and involves large sums of money. Problem gamblers irrationally think that they will be able to gamble their way out of their situation, but instead get more and more in debt.

**"Gamblers become obsessed with winning and only remember the few times when they won rather than all the times when they lost."**

Gamblers get an adrenalin rush which is akin to a drug addiction and they need to gamble more and more frequently and with greater risk to get the same buzz as the addiction develops. They can become obsessed with winning and only remember the few times when they won rather than all the times when they lost.

They can become preoccupied with finding ways to get more money to gamble, which can unfortunately also lead to crime - embezzling funds from companies, fraud or theft. They often don't see it as a crime however because they think they will win it all back and no one will know they stole it - it was just a loan! Their thought patterns can become quite irrational and they can lose contact with reality.



Some signs that an employee may have a gambling problem could be:

- Looking dishevelled in the mornings as if they had been up all night – wearing the same clothes to work two days running
- Always being tired at work – lacking sleep, being away from their desks for long periods
- Taking less care with their appearance and hygiene
- Signs of physical abuse from getting into fights
- Having long lunches and coming back unusually alert, finding it difficult to concentrate
- Gamblers often use gambling as an escape from other problems – to forget their troubles, so gamblers often talk about their woes or look anxious and troubled
- Requesting pay rises, requesting overtime be paid very quickly or any entitlements; constantly discussing money issues with the boss or others
- Seeing the employee in huddles with other employees at their desks – possibly soliciting loans
- Witnessing conflicts between employees who may be trying to get their money back
- The gambler may seem isolated from the work team because everyone is sick of being hassled for loans
- Money going missing from peoples drawers or from petty cash
- Higher than usual number of cheques going missing
- Poor concentration and higher number of mistakes – difficulty in staying focused.

In isolation these signs may not be significant, but if there is a pattern of symptoms this may indicate a more serious problem.

## What can organisations do?

The best thing an organisation can do is to have an Employee Assistance Program (EAP) in place to which managers can refer employees with gambling and any other problems.

Referral to the EAP should be done as part of the work performance management process. If the employee's work performance is in decline, managers should suggest they talk with an EAP counsellor to discuss ways to improve. Rather than diagnose the problem themselves, it is better for managers to let trained counsellors work out what the real issues are and recommend suitable treatment.

## NEITHER HERE NOR THERE – Putting an end to presenteeism

By Jodie McLeod, *IPS Worldwide®*

Presenteeism is not just catchy HR buzz word with a double meaning – it is a very real problem that is costing employers around the world billions in lost productivity. The reason employers have such difficulty addressing presenteeism is because it takes on many different guises, and without being able to pinpoint the causes or problem areas – how can employers possibly find a cure? *IPS Worldwide®* Senior Psychologist Caroline Hodges helps to uncover the ins and outs of presenteeism, and shows how to stop it in its tracks.

### Defining 'presenteeism'

Presenteeism can be generally defined as on-the-job productivity losses, where individuals present at work experience decreased productivity due to illness, low morale, personal distractions or an unhealthy attitude to work. This phenomenon may then impact the productivity of other employees, and extend to the quality of products, services, business decisions, and co-worker and customer interactions.

While presenteeism is essentially a productivity issue, its causes are many and varied. Hodges agrees that the only way employers can successfully combat presenteeism is to first understand the exact nature of the problem.

"You'd have to get the manager themselves to define what they mean by presenteeism," she says. "Are we talking about the people who are there when they needn't be or the employees who are there because they have to pay off their mortgage? Or the third type of person who's just the walking wounded, who is doing their job but doing it in a very poor way?"

If you are concerned that presenteeism of some kind is occurring in your organisation, the following explanations will help to clarify the reasons why it is happening, show you how to detect it, and offer ways to combat it.

### Present and sick

The main type of employee responsible for presenteeism is the individual who comes to work when ill. Not only are these individuals not fully-functioning at the desk, but they also put other employees at risk of contagion, which may result in further absences. Hodges believes that the reasons employees come to work when sick have to do with the workplace culture.

"It depends on the culture of the organisation but a lot of it's fear that if they don't come to work they'll be managed out the door," she says. "There's also the inter-organisational pressure where they're told that they really do need to be at work, so they're forced to come in even when they're sick."

In a recent Australian survey 65 percent of workers admitted they 'always or nearly' go to work when they are sick and just 2 percent of respondents said they stay at home when ill. Of those that stay home, 46 percent of people said they feel guilty for it (Careerone, 2005), which is indicative of the pressure for employees to be present even if they are unwell.

Employees may also arrive at work when ill in response to their own high standards to support their team and foster client/customer relationships. A Swedish study published in the *Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health* in 2000 found there to be a higher incidence of presenteeism in jobs such as welfare, teaching and instruction roles where relationships are an important part of work outcome.



**"It depends on the culture of the organisation but a lot of it's fear that if they don't come to work they'll be managed out the door"**

"I think it comes down to the organisation laying down rules that say – 'when you're, sick stay at home, because we want you here when you're well, and we don't want you to be hurting yourself by working when you're sick.' You need the organisation to foster that from the start so that it becomes part of the culture," says Hodges.

Some ailing employees may feel their illness is not serious enough to warrant a sick day, or they can't afford to take unpaid sick leave. Employees suffering chronic illnesses such as depression, headaches, back pain, allergies or arthritis often push through the day regardless of being in pain. Alarming, the costs incurred from lost productivity due to this presenteeism are significantly worse than would be the costs of absenteeism. A US study by the Cornell Institute found that in 2004 the total costs incurred by headaches, arthritis and allergies were mostly due to reduced on-the-job productivity rather than absent employees or health care costs.

Ease of access to good quality health care and mental health assistance is central to reducing the presenteeism associated with chronic illnesses, as well as other non-physical distractions.

### Present and distracted

Another destructive cause of presenteeism is the loss of productivity caused by non-medical conditions such as work stress, job overload, family problems and other personal difficulties. Even though the individual appears fit for work they are burdened by a host of other issues on their mind and cannot concentrate on completing tasks. While the indicators of distraction are sometimes quite clear, such as low morale or a drop in performance standards, it is difficult for managers to intervene due to the personal and potentially sensitive nature of the problem. Hodges recommends that utilising external counselling services through your Employee Assistance Program is the most appropriate way to handle the situation.

"If the employee can go and see somebody outside the organisation who's used to handling different emotional reactions and interactions, they can quite often talk through the problem, and offer the employee a fresh way of looking at things," she says.

A study published in the Academy of Management Journal in 2001 showed that employees with elder care responsibilities at home showed lower work performance and lower wellbeing than employees without a dependent elder. The study also showed that these employees felt more productive when they could share their concerns with a counsellor. Talking through the issues helps employees to regain focus and be more productive and is, according to Hodges, a good way to help prevent and treat presenteeism across the spectrum.

### Over-present and over-performing

In workplaces that harbour a 'long hours culture', where it is normal or expected that employees stay at their desks beyond usual working hours, employees may resort to working excessively hard to impress their manager. Unbeknownst to many managers, there is a point at which hard work becomes detrimental to productivity.

"Employees who are compelled to overwork are so attached to the job that they want to control every facet of it, or they may have low self-esteem, and they need to keep getting that reinforcement from their supervisors and managers that their commitment is being noticed," she says. Not only can this behaviour eventually lead to job burnout, but it can also have an impact on other employees.

"It could be perhaps that they're so driven that they impact on those around them by overshadowing them – they do tend to alienate the rest of the workforce who figure – why bother when the other guy's going to get all the glory anyway?"

In addressing this problem Hodges again suggests managers look at the organisational culture: where did this expectation come from and is it doing more harm than good? Managers can also monitor over-committed staff using an effective performance appraisal system.

"The quality of the employee's work needs to be reinforced so that they know they're doing a good job. The manager also needs to be aware of when [the employee is] over-extending themselves so that can actually be damped down. You don't want to kill their enthusiasm, but you don't want them to burn out, and by the same token, you don't want to antagonise the rest of the workforce."

As well as having their performance managed, Hodges suggests over-achievers would also benefit from assistance with stress management.

"This type of employee may just need some strategies for stress management, because the more stressed that they get the more they're going to drive themselves. This then further increases their stress and it becomes an unmanageable cycle," says Hodges.

### Over-present and under-performing

The fourth category of presenteeism occurs where the employee is visible at the desk for longer than usual working hours, but who is not actually doing much work. This behaviour often occurs in workplaces where presence at the desk is more highly valued than work output.

"Managers can usually recognise this [presenteeism] from the amount of work that's going on. They need to watch out for employees who will sit and stare blankly at the computer screen or who will just sit and shuffle papers. Unproductive employees are very good at making lists and projecting what they're going to do but not actually achieving it," says Hodges.

Countering the presenteeism of poor performers is essentially a matter of performance management. Ironically, Hodges says, research shows that over-achievers and under-achievers are the least likely to receive performance management in an organisation. "So the two groups who are going to cause themselves problems – one by burning themselves out through overachieving and the others perhaps by rusting out – don't get the attention that the reliable workers do."

Where managers encounter trouble with managing performance, the most convenient source of help is IPS Worldwide's Manager HelpLine®, available through your EAP. As Hodges affirms: "If managers are having any problems with their staff – or they've got a feeling that things aren't quite right – they can just ring the Manager HelpLine and talk it over with one of the clinical managers, who'll be able to set them in the right direction."

## Top five tips for combating presenteeism

1. **Organisational culture:** Value and reward high quality work; question the value of employees working overtime; establish a policy in regards to overtime (eg: time in lieu); maintain consistency in your expectations of all employees.
2. **Performance management:** Avoid employees burning out or under-performing by making your expectations of all employees clear and by providing them with appropriate feedback, rewards, and performance reviews.
3. **Employee Assistance Program:** Ensure employees have access to external counselling to assist with personal, family or work related problems and distractions, and to provide strategies for managing stress.
4. **Management Support:** Provide managers with support through your EAP and encourage use of the Manager HelpLine for when they encounter management difficulties or challenges.
5. **Absenteeism/presence policy:** Avoid rewarding presence (this will encourage employees to come to work when sick); establish the expectation that you want employees to come to work when they're well; encourage the use of sick leave where necessary.

## The cost of presenteeism

- The costs of lost productivity due to presenteeism are 7.5 times greater than costs due to absenteeism. Presenteeism due to chronic conditions such as migraines, allergies and back pain can add up to 15, 20 or even 30 times the costs of absenteeism (Employers Health Coalition, USA, 1999)
- On-the-job productivity losses due to presenteeism account for 60 percent of the total cost of worker illness. The most costly conditions for employers are hypertension, heart disease and mental health problems. (Cornell Institute for Health and Productivity, USA, 2004)
- Presenteeism costs companies as much as \$150 billion in lost productivity, higher healthcare expenses and cascading absences due to contagion – much more than the combined losses due to absenteeism. Small investments in screening, treatment and education significantly offset the incidence of presenteeism (Harvard Business Review, 2004)



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