Trends in Absence Time and Payments Due to Long- and Short-Term Disability and Workers’ Compensation for Employees with Rheumatoid Arthritis in the United States

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Study Population
- US employees within the Workpartners (formerly HCMIS) Research Reference Database (RRDb) from 2001–2019
- RRDb contains:
  - Medical and pharmaceutical claims for over 3 million employees and dependents
  - Enhanced employee demographics (including self-reported race)
  - Job-related employee information (salary, job type, full/part-time status, exemption-exempt status)
  - Employees in all states
  - Claims with absence durations and payments for employee populations eligible for STD=1.2 million, LTD=1.1 million, WC=1.4 million, SL=710,000
- The Workpartners RRDb has been used for research in:
  - Rheumatoid arthritis and related disease categories
  - Specialty pharmacy
  - Enhanced employee demographics (including self-reported race)
  - Dependents

Background
- United States (US) employee benefits include:
  - Sick Leave (SL) for paid time off, generally without a specific reason
  - Short- and Long-Term Disability (STD and LTD, respectively) for non-work-related injuries/illnesses
  - Workers’ Compensation (WC) for work-related injuries/illnesses
- Absences due to SL, STD, LTD, and WC can have significant impact on business performance.
- Employers are intensifying efforts to manage these benefits and make connections with employees' health.
- The 2020 Kaiser Family Foundation survey on employer health benefits provides an excellent overview of typical employer coverage for direct medical and prescription costs.
- It did not include any information on Sick Leave, Short- and Long-Term Disability or Workers’ Compensation.
- Published research on absence costs and lost time often inappropriately uses:
  - Proxies and subjective data (from surveys)
  - Constant dollars and fixed salary or wage replacement figures
  - Highest median payments for STD=1.2 million, LTD=1.1 million, WC=1.4 million, SL=710,000
  - Reporting absences or impairments that didn’t occur during their work hours.
- Claim payments included lump-sum distributions and potentially extended beyond the year they occurred.
- Workers’ Compensation claims and absences have been increasing since 2004 and the percent of employees filing claims varies by benefit.
- For each benefit, the leave lengths and payments are estimated as a percent of salary vary over time.
- A constant cost or salary replacement factor over time for all benefits is not accurate or appropriate.

Methods
- Retrospective analysis of US employees in each year with medical claims in the Workpartners RRDb from the US Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) rheumatoid arthritis and related disease category.
- For rheumatoid arthritis, each year the analysis focused on:
  - The prevalence and Charlson Comorbidity Index score for each year’s population.
  - The percent of eligible employees utilizing each benefit.
- Mean leave length (in days)
- Median payments as a percent of salary
- Using a constant cost or salary replacement factor over time for all benefits is not accurate or appropriate.

Results
- For each benefit, the leave lengths and payments were calculated and compared with baseline (2001).
- The median payments as a percent of salary have been increasing since 2004 and have not been declining over time.
- The percent of employees with rheumatoid arthritis and related disease categories has been increasing since 2004 and the percent of employees filing claims varies by benefit.
- For each benefit, the leave lengths and payments as a percent of salary vary over time.
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Conclusions
- Coordination of benefits is important.
- Analysis of the impact of workplace accidents and disability leaves and payments by use of a constant salary-replacement factor is inappropriate.
- Person-level data by year and benefit should be used.

References

Most Impacted Years

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<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>STD</th>
<th>LTD</th>
<th>WC</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>2%</td>
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Percent of Employees Filing Claims

Average Length of Leaves

Median Payment as a Percent of Salary

For more information, contact Richard Brook at rbrook@bhww.com | Presented at: The International Society for Pharmacoeconomics and Outcomes Research (ISPOR) - May 17-20, 2021 - Virtual Meeting