

The benefits and challenges of demonstrating return on investment (ROI) for workplace wellness initiatives

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Workplace wellness initiatives are a popular approach to enhancing employee health. Employers benefit from reduced absenteeism and presenteeism, a healthier workforce, and the ability to monitor and manage interventions delivered at the workplace. In the current fiscal environment, employers may require a high expected return on investment in order to ensure it is efficiently allocating scarce resources. However, the data and methods required to produce rigorous return on investment studies may differ from standard approaches to the evaluation of occupational health programs. This presentation will use real world examples to motivate the importance of return on investment calculations. These examples will then serve as a basis for demonstrating the additional data required to perform a return on investment study. Simple calculations of internal rate of return (IRR) and dollars saved per dollar invested will be shown to demonstrate methods used to calculate ROI. Finally, the presentation will conclude with examples of how occupational health researchers can collaborate, and partner with, researchers who utilize health finance, in order to perform ROI calculations.

Biography

Robert D. Lieberthal received his PhD from the University of Pennsylvania through The Wharton School's Health Management and Economics program. He is an assistant professor at Thomas Jefferson University's Jefferson School of Population Health and a member of the school's Center for Value in Healthcare. He has published in journals including Health Affairs and Health Services Research, serves on the editorial board of Population Health Management, and serves as a reviewer for Health Services Research, Medical Care, and the International Journal of Health Care Finance and Economics.

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