Depression in the workplace in South Korea

Workplace depression is a major issue across different cultures and economies, with devastating consequences.

Lifetime prevalence of depression in South Korea: **5.6% or 2.8 million**


Depression costs South Korea more than US$1.75 billion in lost productivity (absence from work, and attending work while unwell)**

More than Posco’s 2014 operating profit, one of South Korea’s leading companies

US$1.75b
Lost Productivity

US$1.2
Posco’s 2014
Operating Profit


The cognitive symptoms of depression, for instance difficulties in concentrating, making decisions and remembering, are present up to 94% of the time during an episode of depression, causing significant impairment in work function and productivity.

63% of South Korean employees are highly educated, the highest proportion of all countries surveyed

Highly educated employees with depression are likely to...

- Work in a highly demanding job and therefore be severely impacted by the cognitive symptoms of depression
- Manage others so the impact of their depression has wider consequences


Depression-related presenteeism* costs South Korea US$1.6 billion (*attending work while unwell)

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<tr>
<th>Presenteeism: US$1.6b</th>
<th>Absenteeism: US$138m</th>
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x11 higher than the cost of depression-related absenteeism in South Korea

Cognitive symptoms are a crucial factor affecting workplace performance in people with depression

McIntyre RS et al. Compr Psychiatry. 2015; 56:279-82

Of all countries surveyed, South Korean employees are the most likely to not take any days off work during an episode of depression, impacting their productivity and performance at work

Days taken off work during an episode of depression

0 days = 67.4%
1-5 days = 18.3%
6-10 days = 2.8%
11-15 days = 0%
16-20 days = 0%
21+ days = 2.8%
Don’t know = 8.6%


For more information on the IDEA Survey as well as the LSE Health and Social Care research centre, visit the centre’s blog: http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/healthandsocialcare/

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