

UNLOCKING STRATEGIC VALUE:

The business case for investing in employee health
to generate organisational success

An IOMSC working group report →





THE QUICK READ

CONTRIBUTORS

Dr. Ronald Loeppke	Belmont University College of Medicine/IOMSC
Dr. Anthony Harris	Amazon
Dr. Laure Gillis	ACOEM
Jeff Donnell	Enterprise Health
Dr. Robina McCann	Anglo American
Dr. Michael Kauffman	Lilly
Dr. Kenji Saito	MedLaw LLC
Dr. Bhargav Chandrashekar	GE Healthcare
Joaquim Nunes	International Labour Organization
Dr. Deirdre Phelan	GlaxoSmithKline
Dr. Melvin Seng	Google

The 2025 **IOMSC Thought Leaders Summit** in Geneva brought together more than 50 Chief Medical Officers (CMOs) and other occupational health leaders to discuss the priorities and opportunities for occupational health, both today and into the future.

The **IOMSC Business Case Work Group** developed this position paper on articulating the “business case” of the value of investing in the health and wellbeing of workers. It aims to reinforce occupational and employee health (OEH) as a strategic investment into a maintaining the core “human assets”, capable of delivering measurable clinical and financial value to employer organizations. The bottom line is that maintaining good worker health is good for business.

Key observations:

- Health and safety is now the #1 business risk identified by C-suite and board leaders globally (WTW 2024–2025).
- The global trend of rising chronic disease and ageing working populations are driving up healthcare costs and shrinking the available workforce, threatening productivity and profitability.
- Occupational and employee health (OEH) professionals deliver value far beyond regulatory compliance – in their roles they anticipate, prevent and manage a broad spectrum of physical and psychological health risks and supporting organisations to deliver across their full value chain.
- Strategic OEH programmes are proved to reduce absenteeism, improve productivity, and lower insurance premiums and compensation costs, delivering measurable ROI.
- Investing in prevention – especially for chronic and psychological health – can significantly reduce disease burden and extend workforce engagement, participation and productivity.
- Leveraging OEH as a strategic investment enables organisations to address immediate and emerging risks, including mental health, new pandemics, climate change worker impacts and successfully integrating AI and other technological advances.
- Proactive collaboration between OEH, HR, benefits and risk management teams amplifies the impact of holistic health initiatives which support talent, talent attraction and retention.
- The value for EOH is demonstrable and there are numerous real world data and detailed examples where health investment has boosted the business bottom line.
- Engaging OEH professionals as strategic partners future-proofs organisations, ensuring workforce health, VUCA resilience and sustained business success.

INTRODUCTION

Human Resources consulting firm Willis Towers Watson (WTW) conducts an annual survey of C-level executives and board members to identify their most pressing business risks. In both 2024 and 2025, health and safety was identified as the number one risk and concern among company leaders. This finding was consistent across company size, geography and industry sector. Prior to 2024, health and safety had never appeared in the top three identified risks by senior business leaders – even in the wake of COVID-19. This dramatic shift underscores a new growing recognition of the critical importance of workforce health and safety stability at the highest levels of organisational leadership.

A 2024 study by the McKinsey Health Institute puts the risk in perspective. The report highlights the combination of ageing populations and increasing chronic disease prevalence is straining economies, business and health systems worldwide. Between 2025 and 2050, the global disease burden is expected to rise by 19 percent, and global healthcare spending during the same period is projected to rise from \$11.2 trillion today to \$20.5 trillion. The impact on employers is multifold with not only increased cost and reliance on employer funded health insurances but also lost productivity. The rates of labour force loss from active work participation are expected to rise from 17-23 percent of global GDP resulting in higher costs and a shrinking workforce to pay them.

This position paper on articulating the “Business Case” of the value of investing in the health and wellbeing of workers, developed by the International Occupational Medicine Society Collaborative (IOMSC), aims to reinforce occupational and employee health (OEH) as a strategic asset, capable of delivering measurable clinical and financial value to employer organisations.

I. HEALTH AND SAFETY: THE #1 BUSINESS RISK

At a meeting convened by the IOMSC at International Labour Organization (ILO) headquarters in Geneva in May of 2025, approximately 50 global medical directors in attendance identified and prioritised a set of health and safety issues designed to further define the WTW health and safety risk finding. These strategic priorities were classified as both near-term (immediate) and longer-term (three-to-five years out).

The number one priority discussed by the attendees in the 2025 IOMSC Geneva meeting was the need to articulate a compelling business case to the C-Suite of the value of OEH professionals in improving the health, wellbeing and safety of employees. For near-term risks, mental health was one of the key concerns, followed by geopolitical issues,

de-prioritisation of health within employer organisations, and health risks associated with climate change. Looking over a three-to-five-year horizon, health risks associated with climate change rose to the top of the list, followed by artificial intelligence – viewed as both an opportunity and a risk, particularly in terms of mental health impact and the potential for widening age and socioeconomic disparities.

Another key long-term risk identified was metabolic disease, with the McKinsey Health Institute study reinforcing the rising prevalence of chronic non-communicable diseases (NCDs) including cardiovascular disease, diabetes, cancer and mental health conditions.

II. BEYOND COMPLIANCE: THE STRATEGIC ROLE OF OCCUPATIONAL AND EMPLOYEE HEALTH

While regulatory compliance remains essential, it is increasingly seen as “table stakes” by OEH professionals. The true value of OEH lies in its ability to anticipate, prevent, and address a broad spectrum of health risks – well beyond the minimum requirements. Occupational health professionals are uniquely trained to:

- View employees holistically, not just as “ears for administration of audiograms, arms to give flu shots and lungs for pulmonary function tests,” but as whole individuals whose health is inextricably linked to organisational performance.
- Recognise that health risks extend far beyond compliance check boxes, encompassing physical, mental and social well-being.
- Deliver broader clinical and financial impact by integrating health risk management into core business strategy.

According to the McKinsey Health Institute study, scaling proven health interventions could reduce total disease burden by 35 percent, bending the disease burden curve, with tackling metabolic and behavioural health risks yielding the greatest opportunity to reduce the burden associated with NCDs. Interventions focused on prevention, including population-level prevention and individual-level prevention, could propel 65 percent of the potential health impact largely by helping avoid chronic diseases altogether.

OEH professionals are adept at population health given their de facto focus on caring for employee population cohorts. Further, OEH professionals have a long history of translating population health objectives at the employee level – treating individual workforce members to maintain fitness for work, reduce absenteeism and improve productivity.

III. DELIVERING VALUE: HEALTH, CLINICAL AND FINANCIAL IMPACT

OEH programmes can drive value in several key areas:

- **Traditional Occupational Health Measures:** Injury prevention, exposure management and regulatory compliance remain foundational, reducing direct and indirect costs associated with workplace incidents.
- **Overall Health Measures:** By addressing chronic disease, mental health and preventive measures, OEH programmes can improve workforce health, reduce absenteeism, and enhance productivity.
- **Financial Implications:** Effective OEH programmes lower healthcare costs, reduce workers' compensation claims, and support talent attraction/retention – delivering measurable ROI.
- **The Value of Expanded Prevention:** OEH professionals have proven that primary, secondary and tertiary prevention services focused on health and wellbeing interventions designed to prevent NCDs can yield significant results. According to the McKinsey Health Institute study, applying proven interventions at scale can extend lifespans and reduce disease burden – leading to increased workforce participation and enhanced productivity.

IV. LEVERAGING OEH PROFESSIONALS AS A STRATEGIC ASSET

Many employers initially hire OEH professionals to manage regulatory compliance with an emphasis on health surveillance and treating, recording and reporting on occupational injuries. However, when leveraged strategically and aligned with the business objectives of the organisation, OEH professionals can generate significant enterprise value to the profitability and sustainability of the organisation.

- **Promote and Connect:** At a minimum, OEH professionals can actively promote, refer and connect employees to broader health and wellness programmes. While health and wellbeing campaigns or metabolic disease initiatives are often managed within HR or Benefits, OEH professionals can help identify and connect employee candidates – assisting with health promotion.
- **Expand Offerings:** In many cases, the investment in on-site occupational health clinics can be leveraged and extended to offer a broader mix of services including

primary care, mental health, chronic disease management, and wellness/disease prevention programmes – meeting employees where they are and addressing the full spectrum of health needs.

- **Collaborative Approach:** OEH professionals should work closely with risk management, safety, benefits and HR teams to evaluate and enhance offerings, identifying opportunities to improve both health outcomes and financial performance. While employers invest heavily in employee health initiatives, the return on investment is often difficult to quantify. OEH professionals can help determine both the broader value of investing in healthier employees (VOI) as well as the financial return on investment (ROI), with the aim of lowering healthcare costs and reducing absenteeism/presenteeism costs.

V. FUTURE-PROOFING THE ORGANISATION

The business environment is dynamic, with new risks, shifting workforce models, and technological advancements emerging constantly. OEH professionals are well positioned to help organisations anticipate and adapt to these changes:

- **Emerging Risks:** From mental health and chronic illnesses (e.g. diabetes, heart disease and obesity) to the health impacts of climate change, OEH leadership can help organisations stay ahead of the curve.
- **The AI Productivity Shift:** The rapid integration of artificial intelligence (AI) presents a profound shift in macroeconomic and business trends, carrying both opportunities and risks. Crucially, as AI drives broad productivity gains, improving the health and cognitive resilience of each individual worker contributes proportionally more value to the organisation.
 - **Opportunity:** *This shift strengthens the business case for proactive health investment; keeping workers healthy directly reduces the cost of illness while maximizing the amplified output of retained talent. Additionally, AI can enhance OEH service delivery, improve analytics and support clinical decision-making.*
 - **Risks:** *Conversely, AI adoption and changing workforce models may negatively impact employee mental health, privacy and job security. OEH professionals are essential in managing these transitions, ensuring the health and well-being of retained employees while integrating AI into health services responsibly.*
- **Evolving Workforce Models:** As organisations transition to hybrid and flexible working arrangements, the intentional integration of wellbeing into these models is essential. OEH professionals play a vital role in ensuring health and safety strategies adapt to support employees across diverse and evolving work environments.

VI. ADVOCACY AND STORYTELLING: DEMONSTRATING VALUE

To secure ongoing investment and support, OEH professionals must become effective advocates:

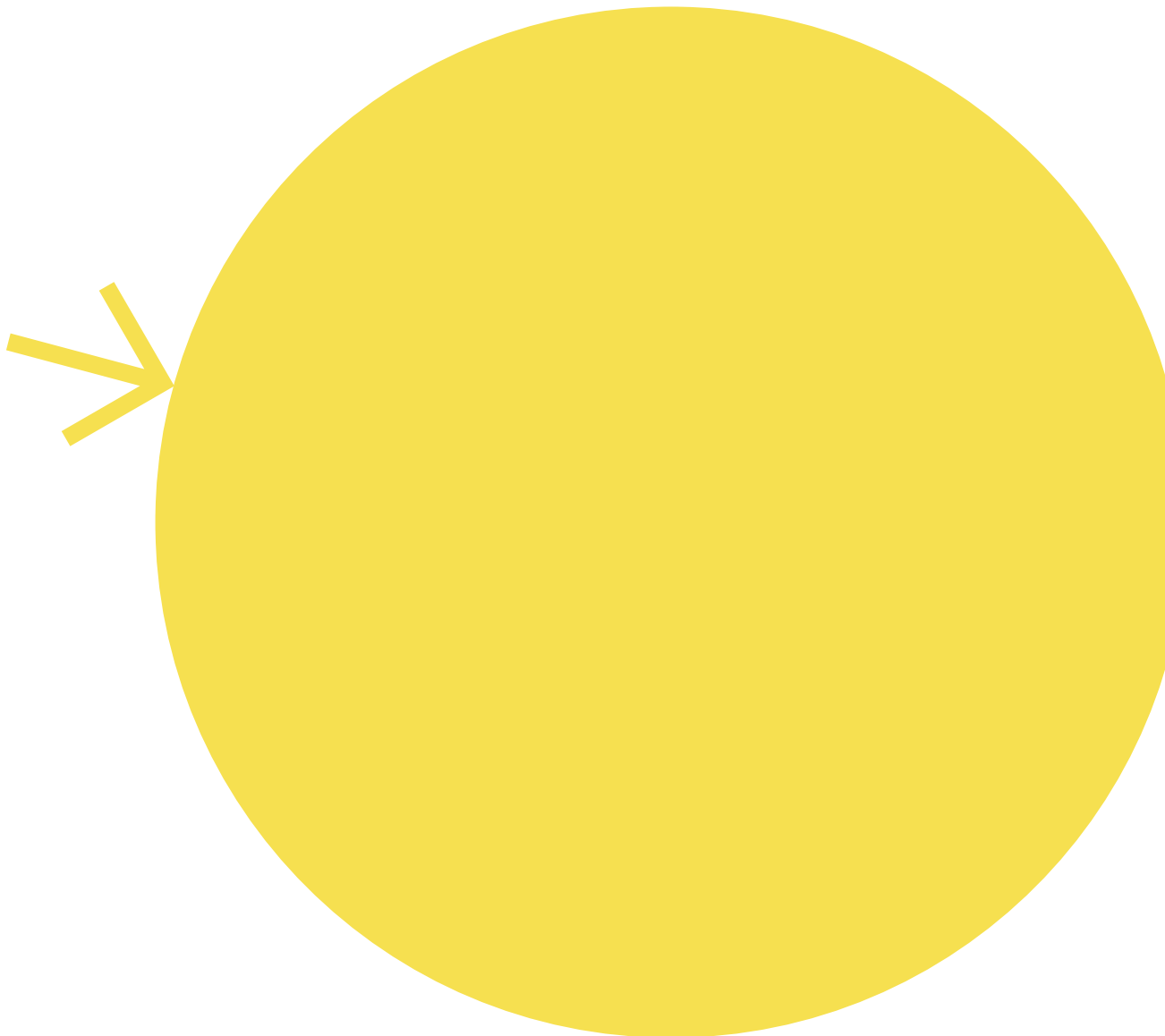
- **Concrete Examples:** Share real-world stories of OEH impact — such as reduced injury rates, improved employee engagement or successful pandemic response.
- **Measurable Value:** Use data to demonstrate ROI, linking health initiatives to business outcomes. To accurately measure this impact and clearly articulate ROI, it is critical to establish baseline metrics before interventions begin and periodically track them across participating populations.
 - *These baselines should include population health risks, preventive screening rates, on-the-job injury rates, safety incidents, hospital and emergency visit rates, healthcare costs, absenteeism and presenteeism.*
 - *Greater integration of safety and occupational health data will help demonstrate clear correlations.*
 - *For the CFO, this data-driven approach usually means improved financial performance and improvements on key performance indicators.*
 - *For the CEO and board members, this usually equates to meaningfully addressing and reducing business risk.*
- **Foster Collaboration:** Build partnerships across the organisation, positioning OEH as a key contributor to strategic goals.
- **Translate Appropriately:** Communicate with the intended audience in mind. Rather than presenting findings and recommendations using clinical terminology, translate content to business outcomes and the opportunity to improve organisational performance.
- **Confident Positioning:** As the WTW study underscores, health and safety is the number one risk keeping executives and board members awake at night. Who better to help define, address and mitigate that risk than OEH professionals collaborating with their EHS and HR peers?



CONCLUSION

Occupational and employee health programmes delivered by OEH professionals are far more than a compliance function – they are a strategic resource that can drive organisational success. In reframing OEH as a value generator, and by OEH professionals implementing primary, secondary and tertiary prevention services, leveraging onsite clinics, anticipating future risks and effectively communicating impact, organisations can unlock significant health and financial benefits and enhance workforce and organisational performance. The IOMSC encourages C-level leaders and board members to engage with their OEH teams as strategic partners, ensuring the health and resilience of their workforce – and their business.

The bottom line is that “Good Health is Good Business”.



PARTNERS

The **International Occupational Medicine Society Collaborative** (IOMSC) seeks to improve worker health and workplace safety on a global scale. The organisation's assembly brings together occupational medicine leaders from 52 member societies in 46 countries to collaborate on key issues and best practises, impacting more than 1 billion workers worldwide.



The **International Labour Organization** (ILO) plays a crucial role in supporting member states by providing knowledge and practical solutions to address various challenges related to workplace safety. Through its resources, research and guidance, the ILO helps governments, employers and workers stay informed about best practises, emerging risks and effective policies. This collaborative approach not only enhances safety standards but also ensures that all stakeholders are equipped to create safer and healthier work environments.



The **World Health Organization** leverages 8000+ of the world's leading public health experts to coordinate response to health emergencies, promote well being, prevent disease and expand access to health care. Its doctors, epidemiologists, scientists and managers worldwide represent 194 member states. The World Health Assembly is WHO's highest level decision-making forum. Every year, delegates from all Member States convene at the World Health Assembly to set priorities and chart a course for global health progress.



Enterprise Health is one of the largest providers of occupational health software in the world, with clients in over 50 countries, nearly a dozen languages and serving several million employees globally. It is the only comprehensive employee health record that combines occupational health and compliance, clinical care and employee engagement and is built on a certified EHR platform – delivering a complete occupational health IT experience on a single, highly-interoperable, cloud-based solution.



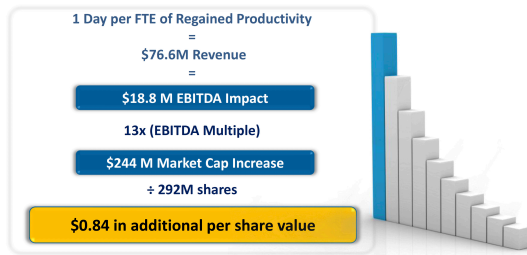
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Example data points to underscore the value of investing in employee health

The Business Value of Better Health

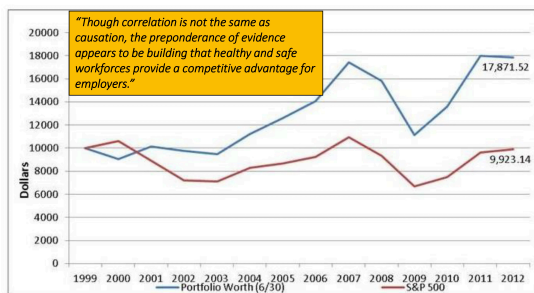
- 58,000 employees, current 8 Days per FTE of health-related productivity loss
- Business Value impact from regaining 1 Day of productivity per year per FTE



Loeppke R. "The Value of Health and the Power of Prevention". *Int J Workplace Health Management*. 2008; 1(2)95-108.

The Linkage: Healthier and Safer Companies Drive Healthier Bottom Lines

CHAA vs. S&P 500 Performance Comparison 1999-2012



Fabius, R; Loeppke, R; et al. "Tracking the Market Performance of Companies That Integrate a Culture of Health and Safety An Assessment of Corporate Health Achievement Award Applicants". *JOEM*. Volume 58: Number 1. Jan, 2016.

