Cost-Effectiveness of Tobacco Use Cessation Treatments

Smoking is the leading preventable cause of death in the United States. More than 70% of adult smokers want to quit, but few succeed without help.

Paying for tobacco use cessation treatments is the single most cost-effective health insurance benefit for adults that can be provided to employees.

Tobacco cessation is more cost-effective than other common and covered disease prevention interventions, such as the treatment of hypertension and high blood cholesterol.

Tobacco-use cessation benefits generate financial returns for employers in four ways:
- Reduced health care costs
- Reduced absenteeism
- Increased on-the-job productivity
- Reduced life insurance costs

Smoking causes heart disease, stroke, multiple cancers, respiratory diseases, and other costly illnesses. Secondhand smoke causes lung disease and lung cancer. Smoking increases costly complications of pregnancy, such as pre-term delivery and low birth-weight infants.

Men who smoke incur $15,800 (in 2002 dollars) more in lifetime medical expenses and are absent from work 4 days more per year than men who do not smoke.

Women who smoke incur $17,500 (in 2002 dollars) more in lifetime medical expenses and are absent from work 2 days more each year than nonsmoking women.

In 1999, each adult smoker cost employers $1,623 in excess medical expenditures.

Neonatal health care costs related to smoking are equivalent to $704 for each maternal smoker. Randomized controlled trials indicate that a smoking cessation program for pregnant women can save as much as $6 for each $1 spent.

Businesses that have included a tobacco cessation benefit report that this coverage has increased the number of smokers willing to undergo treatment and increased the percentage that successfully quit.

Citations


