Depression in the workplace in China

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

Lifetime prevalence of depression in China: 3.3% or 44 million


Depression costs China more than US$20 billion in lost productivity (absence from work, and attending work while unwell) \( \times 1.5 \) higher than the amount spent by shoppers on China’s Single’s Day – the world’s biggest online shopping day

**US$20b**

Lost Productivity

**US$13b**

Spend on “Singles Day”

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


Almost 60% of Chinese employees are highly educated

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

Chinese employees are likely to keep working during an episode of depression, impacting their productivity and performance at work

Days taken off work during an episode of depression

0 days = 29.6%
1-5 days = 35%
6-10 days = 15.7%
11-15 days = 6.5%
16-20 days = 7.5%
21+ days = 5.8%


Depression-related presenteeism costs China US$16 billion \( (* \text{attending work whilst unwell}) \)

Almost \( \times 1.5 \) higher than Sinopec’s 2014 profit, one of China’s largest companies

**Presenteeism: US$16.2b**

**Absenteeism: US$4b**

**2014 Sinopec profit**

US$11b

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

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

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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