

Workplace Wellness Programs and Older Workers

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Workplace wellness programs have undergone rapid growth over the last decade and are present at 83 percent of large firms. However, recent evidence from randomized controlled trials (RCTs) have called into question whether these programs are effective at reducing health spending, improving health, or increasing worker productivity. While there may be little effect on average, the estimates from these studies may mask heterogeneous effects on subsets of workers. In this paper, we use data from a large-scale RCT to estimate the effects of workplace wellness programs on health care spending, health behaviors, and productivity measures for older workers. Relative to prior results, we find that the few positive effects that can be detected among the full sample of workers are not present among workers aged 50 and over. Moreover, when focusing on this older subset of workers, we find some modestly negative effects on sick leave and job search behavior that were not detectable when looking at the full sample. The results are robust to adjustments for multiple hypothesis testing.