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MEDIA RELEASE

Workplace crisis: body pain affects 1 in 3 Australian workers; costs \$10.6 billion a year

Announced today, results from the [2017 Global Pain Index](#) ranks Australia with the highest rate of weekly body pain of the 32 countries surveyed, impacting 68 percent of Aussies and decreasing our quality of life.

Of those surveyed, workers took an average of 3.3 sick days for body pain and 1.4 sick days for head pain, costing an estimated \$10.6 billion in the past year—with nearly half of workers (48 percent) blaming their work environment for head or body pain.

This is consistent with previous studies showing that pain—back problems and arthritis—account for 40 percent of forced retirements in people of working age. (Schofield et al. 2012)

Pain is having a big effect on people's attitude to work as well, with one in three workers with body pain struggling to concentrate at work, another one in three losing motivation due to pain, and one in four saying their body or head pain is impacting their career progression.

Lesley Brydon, CEO of Painaustralia, says the findings are further evidence of a crisis of epidemic proportions facing our health system.

"We are facing a health crisis in Australia, because of the lack of effective pain prevention and management strategies in our workplaces and ineffective pathways for treatment post-injury," she said.

"The financial impact on our economy, our workplaces and our insurers is equally felt by individuals no longer able to work who become isolated, misunderstood and stressed financially.

"The Australian Government must make pain a national health priority as a matter of urgency."

Both in Australia and globally, particularly in young adults, there is a trend toward self-diagnosis, with 42 percent of respondents saying they have self-diagnosed the cause of their body pain and 66 percent saying they have self-diagnosed the cause of their head pain.

One in four consult a pharmacist rather than a doctor to address new types of body pain or head pain—highlighting the role that pharmacists play, and the need for education in pain management for pharmacists and other allied health professionals.

There is also a preference for over-the-counter medicines, with 63 percent preferring it for head pain and 48 percent preferring it for body pain. Prescription medicine was used in only 1.4 in 10 occasions of treatment for head pain.

"The trend towards self-diagnosis and self-medication is cause for concern, and points to the need for better education for allied health professionals, particularly pharmacists, and greater access to education about pain management and the role of medication, for consumers," said Ms Brydon.

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