Sickness absence on a mine site in Ghana - a retrospective descriptive study

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ABSTRACT

**Background:** The impact of sickness absence is the same irrespective of geographic location or the presence or absence of a national insurance system.

**Aim:** The aims of this study are to determine the characteristics and medical causes of sickness absence in a group of employees attending a mine site clinic in Ghana and to compare morbidity data with the WHO Global Burden of Disease.

**Methods:** A descriptive study taking a retrospective look at information on sickness absence (number of spells and days) recorded in clinical notes at a site mine clinic from 2007-2010.

**Results:** 62.8% of employees had at least one excuse duty in the period. The average number of spells per person was 2.4. The average number of days per person per year increased from 4.3 days in 2007 to 8.6 days in 2010. Short term absences lasting 1-7 days accounted for 95.8% of the total number of spells and 51.6% of the total number of days off. Females had a higher proportion of absence compared with males. The main cause of short term absence was infectious and parasitic diseases and the main cause of long term absence was injuries. Only 1.1% of the total number of spells of absence was due to work related incidents.

**Conclusion:** A structured method of managing sickness absence, including personnel and management training and the institution of a trigger system could help manage the number of days off as a result of long term illness and facilitate an earlier return to work for employees.