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**Paper Highlights Employer Cost Advantage  
of Higher Quality Mental Health Care for Employees**

**Arlington, Va.** – The importance of providing employees with access to higher quality mental health care was underscored recently in an article published in the November *Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine*, the official publication of the American College of Occupational and Environmental Medicine (ACOEM). "How Much Does Quality Mental Health Care Profit Employers?" was written by two physicians on the American Psychiatric Association's (APA) Committee on APA/Business Relations.

According to the article by co-authors Alan M. Langlieb, M.D., M.P.H, M.B.A. and Jeffrey P. Kahn, M.D., employers providing higher quality evaluation and treatment of depression and anxiety will see overall medical costs fall, employees miss fewer days of work, and productivity rise.

Mental health disorders are prevalent health concerns, and the World Health Organization predicts that major depression will be the second leading cause of disability by 2020. The spending on common disorders like depression and anxiety have been estimated up to \$83.1 billion (in 2000) and \$63.1 billion (in 1998) respectively in the United States. These staggering figures underscore the need to provide employees with effective treatment, both for their well-being and the overall bottom line of a company.

"There is no doubt that employee anxiety and depression disorders can be costly for American employers," says Dr. Kahn. "But we now understand that the cost of not responding to employees' needs is even more costly in terms of lower job performance and greater long-term health care costs. It is time to start applying the business mantra of "Do It Right the First Time" to mental health care!"

With health care costs rising to unprecedented levels, some companies may consider reducing or eliminating mental health services in an effort to cut health costs. However this approach could prove to actually increase costs. According to the article, studies have shown that patients with anxiety and/or depression and a physical illness have significantly higher health care costs than those with a physical illness alone.

"Mental health benefits that facilitate early intervention are key," says Dr. Langlieb. "Employees suffering from mental illnesses should receive a comprehensive psychiatric evaluation and a treatment plan that might involve mental health professionals and primary care physicians. Employees will have less disability claims, greater work productivity, and improved quality of life."

Dr. Langlieb is assistant professor of psychiatry and director of Workplace Psychiatry at Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine. Dr. Kahn is associate attending psychiatrist at New York Presbyterian/Weill Cornell and clinical associate professor of psychiatry at Weill Medical College of Cornell University.

APA's Committee on APA/Business Relations was formed to establish a dialogue with industry to improve business's basic understanding of mental illness and its effects on the workplace and psychiatry's understanding of business's needs.

The committee's mission is to optimize mental health of employees and dependents by improving access to quality mental health care in the employer-sponsored health system. For more information on the APA's business relations activities, visit the Partnership for Workplace Mental Health Web site at [www.workplacementalhealth.org](http://www.workplacementalhealth.org)

The article "How Much Does Quality Mental Health Care Profit Employers?" can be accessed online at <http://www.workplacementalhealth.org/mhcprofitemployers.cfm>.

**About the American Psychiatric Association:**

The American Psychiatric Association is a national medical specialty society whose more than 36,000 physician members specialize in the diagnosis, treatment and prevention of mental illnesses including substance use disorders. Visit the APA at [www.psych.org](http://www.psych.org) and [www.healthyminds.org](http://www.healthyminds.org).

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