



| By David Sharar, PhD

## Reflections on the 2024 Global Workplace Outcome Data Report

About 15 years ago Chestnut Global Partners (CGP) – with help from Chestnut’s Research Division, the Lighthouse Institute and psychometrician Dr. Richard Lennox – developed, tested, and validated an outcomes evaluation tool called the Workplace Outcome Suite (WOS) designed to measure the workplace effects of EA intervention on employees. [Editor’s note: See Dr. Mark Attridge’s article in this issue entitled *EAP Use and Effectiveness in Six Global Regions from the Workplace Outcome Suite - 2024 Report*] Here’s how it all came about:

Historically EAP “effectiveness” was measured by EA providers self-reporting on basic metrics (such as utilization rates) and “feel good” anecdotes. These tended to focus on counting numbers of users, numbers of sessions, and dissecting processes rather than collecting credible data on “outputs” or actual workplace results of EA interventions. Concurrently, the EAP industry experienced a period in the 1990s and 2000s of stagnant and even decreasing pricing. Marginal or “low tier” providers received the same or similar payment rates as “optimal” or top tier providers. EAPs did not have enough tools to gauge how providers or programs could differentiate themselves on the basis of real performance -- nor how to make a case to purchasers to pay fair market rates or receive higher pricing for better value. A good definition of value is “outcomes achieved relative to cost incurred.” Using this definition, an EA provider cannot have a true value proposition without measuring actual results – or outcomes.

From 2010 to 2018 CGP disseminated the free and publicly available WOS tool to all those interested and worked to help all types of providers with analytics and reporting in exchange for submitting their de-identified WOS data, which we warehoused and used to create periodic summary data analyses. In 2018, CGP was sold to Toronto-based Morneau Shepell (now TELUS). Thankfully, Dr. Mark Attridge has picked up where CGP left off to keep the WOS project moving forward – along with its growing data warehouse. He did this with little remuneration and unselfishly donated a great deal of his expertise and time to benefit this ongoing effort. We owe him our gratitude.

The 61 providers in Dr. Attridge’s current analytical report should also be recognized and congratulated for their commitment to pursuing a higher-level value proposition about what really matters most in our work – the degree to which EA intervention correlates with improved work effectiveness and life functioning. It’s impressive that a common “yardstick” and simple but valid methodological approach was deployed over 12 years by a diverse array of participating global providers – resulting in the most comprehensive study ever completed to date. The kind of results in Dr. Attridge’s article translate into real world evidence that employers and purchasers should notice -- please put this data in front of them. Although we don’t have a non-EAP user matched control group, the sheer volume of cases (62,000 with pre-and post-EAP use data collection) makes these findings undisputable.

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