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ASIA EDITION

Asia leaders convene to drive positive change for Healthier workplaces amidst COVID-19

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In support of Migraine Awareness Week, the Asia virtual roundtable welcomed leaders across the human resource, business and health industry in meaningful discussion on employee wellbeing.

The Progressive Alliance Towards Healthy Workplaces (PATHw), a Pan-Asia coalition of human resources and business leaders, today spearheaded an Asia-wide virtual roundtable, titled “Reimagining Healthier Workplaces in Asia”, to promote healthier workplaces and employee behaviors in the region. The virtual roundtable was held in support of Migraine Awareness Week and brought together key leaders from health, human resource and business industries. The discussion successfully engaged constructive dialogue on key issues that affect employees at workplaces.

“There are multiple issues that affect the workplace, including the increasing prevalence and burden of migraine. In tandem, COVID-19 has shown us how vulnerable our society is by causing profound impacts on the livelihoods of millions and on economies. In light of this, leaders, workplace environments and collaborations play an important role in building a healthier and more resilient workforce,” said Leonhard Schaetz, Global Access Director, Neuroscience, Novartis.

“Our research shows that a great workplace is one in which employees trust the people they work for, have pride in what they do and enjoy the people they work with. Whatever the framework, great workplaces work for both employer and employee. Employers get great results; employees feel appreciated, supported and safe. This foundation is critical to create resilience and to be able to respond to crisis – like COVID-19. For the foreseeable future, continuing emphasis on employee health and wellness, creating ‘flexible’ workplaces and mindsets, and being intentional about culture and how to maintain it virtually, is a sure path in boosting productivity and development,” said Tyler Thorpe, Senior Consultant, Great Place to Work®.

During the first segment of discussion, attendees were invited to hear firsthand insights on the impact of migraine on the Singaporean and Malaysian economy through robust studies presented by health economic experts. This is the first time that an Asian study on prevalence of migraine among workers in the banking sector was reported. Results from the Singapore study showed that overall costs to the economy due to migraine was attributed to missed workdays and lost work productivity.

“The significant impact of migraine on work productivity and regular activity appears to lead to substantial monetary loss, attributed to not only absenteeism but more importantly to presenteeism,” said Associate Professor Dr Ivy Chung, Deputy Dean of Health & Wellbeing Research Cluster, University Malaya, Malaysia. “The Malaysian study presented during the roundtable event highlights the unmet needs in migraine management and the need for a call for awareness and intervention

strategies at individual and organizational level."

The first segment also tackled the response of professional societies to the challenges imposed by lockdown and the pandemic on access to care of patients needing neurological care.

"The major difficulty that faced our patients in a developing country such as The Philippines is the lack of an existing structure for telemedicine and even electronic prescriptions. Access to neurological care relied heavily on the creative responsiveness of professional societies, with the support of the private sector and acquiescence of government. The pandemic has forced us to think out-of-the-box to provide quick but safe solutions to ensure continuous access to proper neurologic care," said Dr. Rosalina Picar, President, Philippine Neurological Association.

The roundtable also underscored key mental health issues that affect employees in the workplace, in light of new working conditions. Key presentations also outlined the importance of sensitizing employers about the burden of pain and disability in employees, as well as helping them identify trigger factors to help employees manage these impacts.

Building on the theme of 'Reimagining Healthier Workplaces in Asia', the second session dived deeper into innovations, programmes and actionable solutions to help employers navigate key health challenges and work towards building healthier workplaces.

The Asia-wide roundtable was well attended by participants from different industries and geographies. This is the first virtual regional event fronted by PATHw as the coalition welcomes the most reputable companies and leaders to understand the positive impact healthy and efficient employees can have on the workplace as well as the overall economy. PATHw previously held a roundtable on 22nd November 2019 in Makati, Philippines, which focused on addressing migraine and its impact on productivity and the economy.