



WELLNESS COUNCIL

OF WEST VIRGINIA

health- headlines

CORPORATE HEALTH REPORT / JANUARY 2010

Industry insider information to help YOU do your job better, faster and smarter

Looking back, now look forward

2009, a good year for wellness. The ongoing workforce health management/wellness movement gained momentum in 2009, as virtually every type of program—from health risk assessments to disease management to behavior modification—rose significantly, according to the *National Survey of Employer-Sponsored Health Plans*, conducted annually by Mercer, a consulting firm.

“A lot more employers were willing to bet on health management in 2009,” said Linda Havlin, Mercer’s global health and benefits intellectual capital leader. “There’s growing anecdotal evidence that well-designed and communicated health management programs can improve outcomes, but we need to better understand and eliminate missed opportunities like noncompliant patient behavior.”

Trends for 2010 and beyond. Reducing health care cost increases is the overwhelming goal for wellness programs in American businesses, according to the Buck Consultants’ 3rd annual global wellness survey. Other parts of the world focus on improving productivity by keeping employees healthy and working (in Asia the most important objective is improving workforce morale). Other trends from the survey:

- Stress is consistently cited as the top health risk driving wellness programs in all areas of the world except for the U.S. and Latin America where lack of exercise and poor nutrition are of top concern.
- Wellness programs are most prevalent in North America where 77% of respondents offer them.
- The fastest growing components of wellness initiatives around the world are technology-driven tools, such as Web portals, online healthy lifestyle programs, and personal health records.
- Onsite programs expected to rapidly increase include caregiver support, personal health coaching, and healthy vending machine food choices.

RESEARCH BRIEFS

Sick? Stay home. 91% of Americans said they want their coworkers to stay at home if they are infected with H1N1, according to a national survey released by Mansfield Communications. If you even think about showing up at work sick, 83% of coworkers will tattle on you. Such response highlights the importance of communicating your company's policies on sick leave, especially any new policies regarding pandemic flu. *So may an employer involuntarily send home an employee who has or is exhibiting symptoms of H1N1?* "Yes," say employment law attorneys at Ogletree Deakins. "Of course, employers must be careful to apply such a practice in a manner that does not discriminate on the basis of other protected characteristics (e.g., gender, race, etc.)," they said in a recent Q&A report.

Lower salt and \$ave. Reducing Americans' average intake of sodium to recommended amounts could save as much as \$18 billion/year in health care costs and improve the quality of life for millions of Americans, according to a RAND Corporation study. Meeting national sodium guidelines could eliminate 11 million cases of high blood pressure each year. The study published in the *American Journal of Health Promotion* (Sept/Oct 2009) is one of the first to estimate the economic benefits of lowering sodium consumption.

Workplace gossip. Gossip in the workplace can be a weapon in reputational warfare or a gift and can offer clues to power and influence not found on organizational charts. New research from Indiana University details how the weapon is wielded—and its influence muted—in a rare study that caught this national pastime on video. The study, published in the *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, identifies subtle ways that people who are targets of gossip are negatively evaluated during formal work meetings, including veiling criticism with sarcasm or talking up another colleague for comparison. It also discusses how efforts to embark on negative gossip can be effectively and subtly derailed, by changing the subject, targeting someone else for criticism, or by pre-emptive comments that are positive.

FREE-quent flyers

FREE resource to help your employees make healthier choices at restaurants. www.HealthyDiningFinder.com identifies healthy dining choices and corresponding nutrition information (calories, fat, fiber, for example) at thousands of restaurant locations nationwide—fast food, casual dining, and more. New restaurants added regularly. Check your zip code for healthiest choices near you. Free materials available on the site (from *Spread the Word*, home page) to introduce this resource to your employees (post the link on your intranet, for example). Site was developed by health professionals with partial funding from the CDC.

FREE heart healthy recipes. To help busy people and families shop for, prepare, and serve healthy meals, the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute of the National Institutes of Health created and published *Keep the Beat Recipes: Deliciously Healthy Dinners*. The new cookbook features 75 simple and delicious recipes influenced by

Asian, Latino, Mediterranean, and American cuisine that are good for your heart and taste great too. View online at <http://email.nhlbihin.net/heSubLink.asp?p=2&h=3&g=23&r=1> or order (\$5).

FREE policy statement from the American Heart Association. An estimated 25–30% of companies' annual medical costs are spent on employees with excess health risks from heart disease. The AHA's policy statement with important recommendations is at <http://circ.ahajournals.org/cgi/reprint/CIRCULATIONAHA.109.192653>. Keys to a successful worksite wellness program include tobacco cessation and prevention, regular physical activity, stress management/reduction, early detection and screening, nutrition education and promotion and weight management along with disease management, CPR/AED training, and changes in the work environment to encourage healthy behaviors. Also released were the Start! Fit-Friendly 1,200 companies recognized by the AHA for creating a culture of physical activity and health through walking. For free online kits and tracking tools, go to www.startwalkingnow.org.

FREE Workplace Safety Guides. Online at www.WorkplaceSafetyGuides.com, operated by Savetz Publishing. A collection of articles with on-the-job safety tips.

FREE guide to achieve smoke-free campus. Designed by Washington Health Foundation for hospitals and health systems, contains helpful info for all companies. View step-by-step instructions and example of how to create and maintain a tobacco-free campus at www.whf.org/DestinationTobaccoFree.

FREE samples of science publications from the National Institute of General Medical Sciences, part of the National Institutes of Health. Teachers can order classroom sets of printed publications at www.nigms.nih.gov/Publications.

FREE health reform report for small biz. HHS Secretary Kathleen Sebelius released a new report, "Lower Premiums, Stronger Businesses: How Health Insurance Reform Will Bring Down Costs for Small Businesses." Health insurance reform will bring down costs for small businesses by creating a health insurance exchange, providing a small business tax credit, ending the "hidden tax" on small businesses that provide health insurance and preventing arbitrary premium hikes. Reform will also ensure Americans have stable, secure insurance coverage, limit out-of-pocket spending and eliminate caps on benefits. Updates at www.HealthReform.gov.

Odds @ the end: You can exercise all your fingers by typing just one of these words: *diastrophism, micropsia, supplicatory, adiaaphorism, and simpatico*. Exercise your brain by looking up their meanings.

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