

Health and wellness in the workplace essay



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY With the rising cost of health benefits and compensations many, companies are turning to a more feasible way to take care of health and wellness issues. It is becoming more practical and cost efficient to incorporate a health and wellness program into the company practice.

The extent of how much a program is applied depends greatly on how much a company can and is willing to spend, and how committed they are to help the individual employee have a healthy lifestyle. With a program properly put into practice, both the employee and the employer will see immense benefits. Implementing a Health and Wellness program can be simple for employers who are wishing to reduce health care costs and decrease absenteeism. This can be done by encouraging everyone one involved to show support and commitment to the new services being offered. The best way for companies to introduce such programs is to offer options such as workshops for employees to experience specific ways to live healthier quick meetings during office or lunch hours to learn new tactics and be reminded of previous ones special staff to assist in everyday office lifestyleThe different ways to efficiently introduce the advantages of healthy living will have to be determined by each company depending on the cost of implementing it.

Putting a health and wellness program will benefit any company by Lowering insurance costs with a simple plan introduction Providing feedback to employees about all aspects of the company? s human resources and organizational behavior Controlling long-term health care costs Yielding net savings of \$3. 44 for every dollar spent on programming. **INTRODUCTION**As

obesity rises in North America, short term disability rises in direct proportion. This result is costing Canadian companies \$16 billion per year and this trend is steadily on an increase.

When companies invest in a health and wellness plan, they are able to cut salary expenses and insurance claims significantly. Our research reveals possible options to help reduce the rising costs businesses are now facing. Statement of the Problem ABC Corp. has approached us with a set of health issues which are typical of an unhealthy work environment. Our preliminary research shows that several employees in your company are on Short Term Disability (STD) leave. Others who mostly seem healthy are on sick leave more often than other employees.

Complaints about neck aches, and backaches are quite frequent. There is also a higher incidence of obesity and related illnesses at ABC Corp. In short, ABC Corp. has paid out \$375 000 in benefit claims over the last year and a half. The costs of hiring and retraining new employees are on top of that. If this trend continues, very soon ABC Corp could experience some serious financial pitfalls.

Since the resources are readily available for Health and Wellness plans, you have an opportunity to implement a plan that will increase your employee's well-being by introducing simple techniques to improve overall health, mental alertness, and morale. For every dollar an organization spends on health and wellness, they receive on average a \$6 return on their investment. Objectives The objectives of our study are to recommend strategies to Introduce a health and wellness plan accessible to all

employees. Reduce short term disabilities. Improve employee mental and physical well-being. Scope In our study we have found the following: Strategies to reduce short term disability ? A healthy lifestyle reduces disability, nutrition, fitness and the reduction of stress play a major role in a healthy lifestyle.

Benefits of Health and Wellness plan - Reduces insurance premiums, absenteeism rates and raises the moral of the staff. Effects of a Health and Wellness plan ? Increase productivity by providing the tools necessary to create a healthy lifestyle, it also increases the physical and mental health. It is important to create a program to encourage employees to maintain a healthy lifestyle throughout their work day. The readily available recourses benefit both the employee and the cooperation by creating a happier more productive employee who helps lead to the success of the company.

DISCUSSION Aspects of an unhealthy lifestyle An unhealthy lifestyle greatly affects productivity in Canadian companies; this is due to improper eating habits and a lack of physical exercise.

This increases the costs of health care claims made by Canadian companies, running the expense costs much more than anticipated. Risks Associated with an unhealthy lifestyle The choices we make about our lifestyles affect our long-term health; by not eating properly or exercising, we create greater stress on our bodies creating health problems. Also the work load we take on can affect our morale and quality time with the family. Some serious conditions include: Diabetes Lung disease Cancer Cardiovascular Disease (<http://www.>

canadian-health-network.ca/servlet/ContentServer?cid=

1158426817654&pagename=

CHN-RCS/CHNResource/CHNResourcePageTemplate&c=CHNResource)

These diseases can all be controlled and reduced with lifestyle change. By reducing obesity, you are able to get better control over these diseases and reduce the occurrences. Diabetes has rapidly increased in the population due to obesity; this increase has a direct relationship. Another adverse effect of an unhealthy life style can be cardiovascular disease; the chances of getting heart disease are greatly reduced when you exercise regularly, eat well and adopt a non-smoking life style. The chart depicts the death rate by the four major diseases related to an unhealthy lifestyle.

With a change in lifestyle these numbers can be greatly reduced. Figure 1: The mortality rate of the four main diseases related to an unhealthy lifestyle. Source: <http://www.ksf.org/eng/media/press/20051002.shtml> Better Health for a Better Hong Kong (2007) When employees are aware of the statistics confirming the effects of an unhealthy lifestyle, they become more motivated to make a change in there lifestyles.

The education and resources you can provide will increase your employees well being, which will help to decrease the cost of health care that is paid out each year. The Cost of Health Care for Companies The cost of health care for companies is on the rise due to the lifestyles of employees. In 2001, the cost of health care per employee was reported at \$9, 992; this includes the cost the company incurs due to the absenteeism. With this number on the rise companies need to look for ways to reduce costs.

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The cost of an employee who has had diabetes for nine years is \$14,602 annually. It is estimated that the cost of healthcare will rise to 4 trillion dollars a year across the nation by 2015. The chart depicts the estimated rise in the cost of health care; a change in lifestyle can reduce this expected climb. Figure 2: The rising cost of Health Care around the world. Source: http://www.healthleadersmedia.com/magazine/view_magazine_factfile.cfm?content_id=36314

Datamonitor (July 2002) Many companies have begun to charge employees who don't maintain a healthy lifestyle a monthly fee to help cover the costs. This does not solve the problem; it creates tension and reduces productivity. Also many employees will begin to seek employment at other organizations causing your cost of training and recruiting to increase. A more effective way to cut costs is to provide employees with the necessary tools to create a healthier lifestyle, such as an on-site gym, healthy choices cafeteria, yearly bonuses based on health improvements. These incentives help employees to make healthier choices, reducing their health risks.

When employees maintain a healthy lifestyle they reduce doctor visits and are able to increase productivity. This helps to reduce the cost of health care and puts less stress on the company's budget. Aspects of a Healthy Lifestyle To live what is considered to be a healthy lifestyle, Canadians should exercise at least three times a week for a minimum of thirty minutes per session. Also, it is vital that they follow the Canadian Food Guide and ensure that they are sleeping for at least eight hours per night. Benefits of Following a Healthy Diet Following a healthy diet can greatly decrease the risk of serious illness.

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Creating a nutrition plan that incorporates the recommended servings by the Canadian food guide can help to reduce obesity. The food guide also recommends that the use of portion control is an effective method to weight loss. A balanced diet can reduce the risks of serious diseases, such as Obesity Heart disease Diabetes High cholesterol Cancer The Canada food guide outlines the recommended serving for each food group to help make a balanced diet easy to maintain. The chart below shows the number of serving that a child, teenager or adult should be taking on a daily basis.

Figure 3: Servings by the Food Guide Source: http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/food-guide-aliment/basics-base/quantit/index_e.html Health Canada (2007) The Benefits of Snacking Snacking through out the day helps to keep your energy up and creates more productivity. The snacks you choose should count towards your daily servings on the Canada food guide.

Some recommended snacks are: Fresh fruit in small manageable containers Raw vegetables Yogurt or frozen yogurt Pita bread Assorted nuts If you encourage your employees to follow these changes, the cost of health care will decrease over time. With personalized plans for each employee you can work into there eating habits and create some easy modifications. Benefits of Regular Exercise The physical benefits of regular exercise contribute in many ways to the physical wellbeing of a person. It has been proven that individuals who remain active greatly reduce the risk of the following conditions Heart disease High blood pressure Osteoporosis Diabetes Obesity Remaining active also increases the longevity of an individual? s joints, tendons, and ligaments. Mental stability is strengthened and life expectancy prolonged as a person follows these simple steps. A thirty minute period of <https://assignbuster.com/health-wellness-in-the-workplace-essay/>

exercise at least three times a week will help: Reduce fatigue Reduce headache Reduce muscle aches or stiffness Improve weakened immune system (making the individual prone to common colds and influenza) Being Active To be active every day is a step towards better health and a healthy body weight.

Canada's Physical Activity Guide recommends building 30 to 60 minutes of moderate physical activity into daily life for adults and at least 90 minutes a day for children and youth. You don't have to do it all at once. Add it up in periods of at least 10 minutes at a time for adults and five minutes at a time for children and youth. Start slowly? and build up.

? At Home Spend less time being inactive like watching TV or playing computer games. Try a new activity each month. Plan active outings such as bike rides, walks or hikes. Take your kids to the park and join in their fun.

? Everywhere Move more each and every day – every step counts including taking the stairs to do your laundry or walks to the mailbox, video or grocery store. Stay flexible – bend and stretch throughout the day or try tai chi or yoga. Put on some music and dance. Use a pedometer to track the number of steps you take each day and try to increase them each week. ? Activities you can do at work: Take stretch breaks during meetings. Have a “ walking” meeting – grab your colleague and discuss business while taking a walk.

Take the stairs. Pretend the elevator is out of service. Replace your coffee break with a walking/wheeling break. Active living is not that same as an exercise program. Active living means making physical activity a part of everyday life whether you are taking the stairs instead of the elevator,

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jogging, taking a dog to the park, or swimming laps in a pool. Active living at work is about integrating physical activity into our daily lives.

The overall goals of a successful program at work will: Encourage employees at any fitness level to be more active and stay active. Provide information about health benefits of being active Provide strategies for incorporating active living into daily routines. Provide opportunities for being active to, from and/or at work Will recognize employees for their efforts Basic Exercises in the Workplace Increased physical activity at the workplace will improve mental capacity and emotional wellness. Some examples are yoga, meditation and basic stretching. All of which contribute to providing the body with some variation of movement and providing an outlet to channel stress. Mental Health Mental health is a crucial dimension of overall health and an essential resource for living.

It influences how we feel, perceive, think, communicate and understand. Without good mental health, people are unable to fulfill their full potential or play an active part in everyday life. Mental health issues can address many areas, from enhancing our emotional well-being, treating and preventing severe mental illness to the prevention of suicide. Reasons to Implement Health and Wellness in the Workplace With the costs of insurance premiums rising, the majority of the focus lies on fully insured health plans. The benefits of implementing a wellness program in the workplace are well documented, but many companies are at a loss when it comes to how to go about starting such a program. Some companies employ health professionals, others assign personnel to their attention between

administering the health and wellness plan and other job functions such as Human Resources.

From a cost / benefit standpoint the overall returns on such arrangements can be uncertain. That is why many companies choose to retain an outside expert like Gateway Consulting. Implementation of a Health and Wellness Program Setting up a wellness program can be an intimidating task.

Organizations want to reduce health care spending, while at the same time improve the morale and productivity of the employee base. It is necessary to understand that all employees are at a different stage of readiness to make changes to their health, habits, and behaviors. Marketing programs to employees and offering strategies enhance program success.

Regardless of company size, most employees are either unaware of their risk factors or unwilling to consider change. A closer look will generally show that a very small group drives health care spending. 80% of health care cost increases are driven by 20% of employees. Cost Analysis Information regarding health and safety programs currently in place, employee demographics, culture, health care systems, claims information, and key variables that may affect employee health and a company's current health care costs are used to make recommendations regarding health-related programs. Canadian Statistics The statistics shown below are Canadian statistics in relation to employment insurance and the costs associated.

They are ? Average number of days lost per worker due to illness or short-term disability in Canada is 7.6 days for 2006. ? Average number of days lost per worker is 9.8 for the service industry.

? Average weekly employment insurance benefits paid for sickness leave is \$286.75 ? The average savings for small businesses are \$59,048 for sickness leave and \$22,438 in training costs. The company must look at the costs related to implementing such a program and to insure that they will not be going into debt due to costs being extremely high in the beginning. Eventually the benefits will start to outweigh the initial costs with absenteeism falling and higher morale employees will become apparent.

Physical Threats Physical activity is associated with fewer symptoms of anxiety and depression, and is a proven antidote to stress with a positive effect on mood. Various health and medical conditions can cost companies in the short and long run, some of which are Excessive tobacco and alcohol use

Obesity - Over half of Canadians carry excess weight and two-thirds of these are considered to be at health risk.

Diabetes - Physical activity can reduce the risk of developing non-insulin-dependent diabetes by as much as 50%. Diabetes is also a complicating factor in heart disease and stroke.

Cardiovascular Disease - Regular physical activity reduces the risk of high blood pressure, stroke, and coronary heart disease; the latter by as much as 50%.

Effects of Health and Wellness Programs in the Workplace A health and wellness plan effectively used has many positive benefits in any organization for both the employee and the employer. Both parties can profit not only financially, but also it also contributes to satisfying Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs from the program.

Benefits to the Employer The cost of implementing a plan can be quite expensive to a company although the return on investment will continually increase proportional to employee.

When employees are given the opportunity to participate in health and wellness programs, some statistics that support the benefit from such an implementation in various companies are Wellness programs are emerging as crucial to the long-term control of health care costs and that these programs yield net savings of \$3.44 for every dollar spent on programming. Waste Management, Inc. , implemented a pilot stress management program for employees and their families; it reduced the total number of claims for the company and resulted in estimated savings of between \$3,750 and \$15,000 per participant, per year. Johnson and Johnson reduced their absenteeism rate by 15 percent within two years of introducing its wellness program. The company also cut its hospital costs by 34 percent after just three years.

Northern Gas Company employees who participate in the company's corporate exercise program take 80 percent fewer sick days than non-exercising employees. Maintaining a healthy organization improves the ability to attract and retain key people. Having a wellness program also lets the employee know that the organization is concerned about their general health and well-being. Employee Benefits Having a healthy lifestyle can impact every part of a person's day-to-day life.

A workplace wellness program can benefit a person by making them lead healthier and happier lives. By providing such a program an employer is able to help employees: Increase production and efficiency Better response and accept work situations Understand their current health level Reduce risk of various diseases and illnesses Better their general health and well being By providing a Health and Wellness Program to employees, your organization

will create a satisfied and productive work environment increasing efficiency and effectiveness which leads to fewer injuries and less human error.

CONCLUSIONS Summary of Findings Implementing a Health and Wellness plan into the work place will reduce costs and create greater satisfaction among employees. A Health and Wellness plan will be able to incorporate fitness and nutrition which will help to place less strain on the company health care system.

The benefits of a health and wellness plan are Lower Health Care costs Higher employee morale Higher productivity Interpretation of findings Our research has lead us to understand the relationship between lifestyle and productivity. By improving the lifestyle of employees we are able to reduce costs and create greater efficiency. We reduce absenteeism and create a more realistic health care budget. The Health and Wellness plan will help Inform employees of health risks they may be facing Create a action plan for each employee to improve their lifestyle Teach employees about proper nutrition and exercise

RECOMMENDATIONS A Health and Wellness plan can benefit a company on many levels. Looking at what this has done for other organizations and the rewards it creates, we suggest that you consider a few options ? Implement a gym facility in the office to encourage regular exercise ? Provide lessons to employees on stress reduction techniques ? Create nutrition plans that will reduce risk in employees diets ? Provide yearly bonus incentives when employees make positive changes in there lifestyle Works Cited Woodson, Phyllis . " Eastern Virginia Medical School .

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