

November 2009

# HealthWorks

A newsletter of Tri State Occupational Health for its employers



## Total Health Management: Keeping Your Employees Well

by Deb Poppe, DPT Manager, Tri State Occupational Health

Personal health and healthcare costs are hot topics in today's political arena and in company discussions.

Health costs are predicted to increase to more than \$4 trillion in the next six years; organizations and individuals will bear the burden of these costs. How that cost will be distributed to employers, employees, and insurance carriers is questionable at this time.

With healthcare reform at the political forefront in Washington DC, companies will need to position themselves to respond. What are companies' choices and how do they position themselves to become an advocate of health and wellness for their employees?

Being proactive and comprehensively analyzing your company's health needs is a sound business decision and is the right thing to do regardless of what legislation is passed.

Your company's total health management plan should include:

### Medical Wellness

Educates employees and gives them access to cost effective care at the appropriate site. It provides employees with education on disease prevention, healthy behaviors, and health coaching.

### Health Plan

A comprehensive plan with benefits that support wellness opportunities and preventive exams. Health plan coverage generally includes less than five percent for wellness (annual exams and prevention programs)



while the remaining 95 percent of coverage is for diseases and illness. In more realistic terms, a health plan is a disease plan.

### Health Information Distribution

Educating employees with a variety of methods (electronic, paper, programs) to provide employees with information so they can base their choices and decisions on knowledge and reliable resources.

### Disease Management

Managing high cost conditions, engaging employees in comprehensive programs, and encouraging compliance with recommendations is necessary to control cost associated with medically complex employees. Disease management programs focus on the five percent of employees who are costing the company over 90 percent of their healthcare costs.

### Comprehensive Occupational Health Program

This aspect is essential to prevent and control costs associated with injuries. Employees are a valuable resource and emphasis should be on prevention and education. Education on safety, prevention, and health encourages employees to use these behaviors at home and work.

Ergonomic teams and involving employees with identifying potential risks and near misses is key to prevent and engineer out risks associated with work. Return to duty and reintegration of injured worker policies should be in place. These help to define what modified work is available and how restrictions will be monitored and progressed. Guidelines should be in compliance with ADA regulations.

### Absence Management

Outlined and monitored by human resources, this gives structure and consistency to handling absenteeism, presenteeism, and communicates guidelines for FMLA, short term and long term disability, including the aspects of the ADA.

### EAP and Behavior Health Programs

These programs give employees an option for external assistance and provide employees with early interventions and reduce risks.

### Health Management

These initiatives need to be comprehensive and integrated within the organization. The design of the program should be well effective

and based on an environmental assessment. Communication and education need to be varied and on different medium. Health coaching and health education should be available and easily accessible, with effective incentives to engage employees and to increase participation in these initiatives.

### Biometric Screening and Health Risk Assessment

Health Risk Assessments (HRA) are becoming common with companies. By incorporating HRAs, organizations are able to stratify their risk and design interventions based on data to directly reduce risks and cost associated with unhealthy behaviors.

### On Site Medical Services

An option for most employers to consider is having a medical professional on-site for dedicated hours. This is a cost effective way to allow employees access to medical health for personal and work related injuries and illnesses, in addition to prevention and loss control.

Bottom line—there are numerous interventions that will effectively decrease your organizations' direct and indirect medical cost. Research shows that employees with poor health have a longer recovery from injury and illness, often taking three to four weeks longer than a healthier person. Employees with poor health have an average of nine more sick days per year.

The indirect costs associated with delayed recovery and missed days alone are staggering. Up to 75 percent of an organization's healthcare costs are driven by employees' lifestyle-related behaviors. In well designed programs of total health management, organizations have an average reduction in healthcare cost, sick leave, disability cost, and workers' compensation of more than 25 percent. Most employers generally spend less than two percent of healthcare costs on prevention & screening, education and preventive strategies.

Organizations exploring opportunities to cut healthcare cost should globally assess their options associated with employees in poor health.

## Calendar of Events

### H1N1 & SEASONAL FLU: WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

**November 4, Mercy Sixth Floor Auditorium, 250 Mercy Drive, Dubuque Room 200, 8:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m.** Learn about these strains of flu and vaccinations; how the symptoms differ and when to seek medical attention. Call (563) 589-9600 to register

### HY-VEE/MERCY HEALTH FAIR

**November 6, All three Dubuque Hy-Vee locations, 10:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m.** Get free screenings: blood pressure, blood sugar, height/weight, waist circumference & body mass index.

### GO RED FOR WOMEN SPECIAL

**November 9, 6:30-7:00 p.m., KWWL, Channel 7** Mercy and Medical Associates are proud to team up with the American Heart Association and KWWL to sponsor a Go Red for Women television special to educate women on the importance of heart health.

### JOINT PAIN: NON-SURGICAL TREATMENT OF NECK AND LOW BACK PAIN

**November 12, Mercy Medical Center Sixth Floor Auditorium, 6:30-8:00 p.m.** Learn about non-surgical treatment options for neck and low back pain. Call (563) 589-9600 for more information.

### JOINT PAIN: HIP & KNEE

**November 17, Mercy Sixth Floor Auditorium, 10:00 a.m.-11:00 a.m.** Find out treatment options including exercise, nutrition, medication and surgery, and about the importance of getting a diagnosis. Call (563) 589-9600 for more information.

### WHAT'S HOT, WHAT'S NOT! - THE TOP TEN HEALTH TOPICS FOR 2010

**November 17, Grand River Center Ballroom, 7:00 p.m.-8:30 p.m.** Don't miss this entertaining and insightful look into how you achieve your "personal best" for a longer, healthier life by a well-known Public Radio host, Dr. Zorba Paster. Call (563) 589-9600 for more information.

## HealthWorks

*HealthWorks is published by Tri State Occupational Health for its employers. The purpose of Tri State Occupational Health is to provide you with resources and information to make your workplace safe and healthy. Contact Deb Poppe at (563) 584-4606 or [dpoppe@mahealthcare.com](mailto:dpoppe@mahealthcare.com) for more information.*

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