

Ideas For A Corporate Wellness Program

Why Corporate Wellness Program is a Need Of The Hour

Over the past five decades of the industrial, economic, and digital revolution, the world has encountered an unprecedented change in the food and lifestyle of the population. The foods have become unnatural and lifestyle unbalanced. The essential survival behaviors of Fasting / Feeding, Sleep/wake, Activity / Exercise have become disrupted. These disruptions have resulted in a group of medical disorders called Food And Lifestyle diseases. The common amongst these are:

- Overweight and Obesity
- Metabolic Syndrome (a Prediabetic condition)
- Type2 diabetes
- High Blood Pressure
- Heart Disease
- Stress disorders-Insomnia, Anxiety, and Depression

An individual afflicted with one disease may have another illness or a combination of conditions. A good example being Obesity and Type2 Diabetes, Metabolic Syndrome and sudden heart attack, Type2 diabetes, and Heart disease. India currently is considered the diabetes capital of the world. The city-dwelling young individuals are at risk of developing Type2 diabetes at an age as young as 35 years and heart attack as young as 40 years. The cost of medical care of these diseases can get astronomical, expected even to bankrupt the health care funds of wealthiest nations and corporations in the world. The financial burden from loss of productivity and sick care of these diseases is the biggest threat to the economic growth of the developing country like India.

To preserve health and prevent disease, humans have to adhere to two enduring philosophies:

1. *The Prevention comes at a fraction of the cost of sick care*

When it comes to new food and lifestyle diseases; the societies, corporations, and countries who will spend a fraction of funds on preventive wellness programs are set to save a fortune on sick-care.

2. *To Prevent, Reverse and Cure a disease, one must know and treat its cause*

The cause of new food and lifestyle diseases is unnatural foods and an unbalanced lifestyle. The expensive treatments offered by medical science and the pharmaceutical industry have focused only on the symptoms and not on the actual cause of these diseases. Therefore, there is not a single drug or treatment which has reversed or cured Type2 diabetes or high blood pressure, or heart disease. Every year big pharmaceutical companies come out with 6-8 new costly prescriptions drugs and injections for Type2 diabetes. None of these have the potential to reverse or cure the disease. The drug and injection lists keep growing with every passing year, condemning the patient to a life long dependence on the most expensive treatments.

The Sensible Solution - The most effective sensible solution to control the onslaught of the epidemics of Obesity, Type2 diabetes, and related diseases is to prevent and manage these diseases via grass-roots wellness programs. The economically advanced country like the United States offer the wellness programs which get managed commonly by the outside consulting company charging big fees. Such programs have not shown a grand promise for the simple reason that the targeted clients- the employees do not have the ownership of the program and do not get rewarded in any form. The only financial beneficiary is the consulting company charging big fees.

The significant benefit of a Self-managed grassroots wellness program, on the other hand, is that the program comes at minimal costs to the corporation. In a properly structured grassroots Wellness program, the employees hold the ownership both concerning its structure and its outcomes — both the financial gain from a lower disease burden and bonus incentives from healthcare cost savings are theirs to keep.

Goals of A Corporate Wellness Program- Review the section: Ideas: Grass Root Wellness program on this Website regards the four essential purposes of any Wellness Program.

What Are The Essential Parameters Of The Self Managed Corporate Wellness Program

1. **Biometric screening** - This includes the following health parameters :

- Weight and Height measurement for the calculation of BMI (Body Mass Index) -For the Indian population, the upper limit of healthy BMI is 23. One can calculate BMI by using a formula available on google.
- Waistline measurement- This is a more critical measurement from a health risk point of view because it reflects the amount of disease-producing fat in the liver and abdominal organs. Measure the waistline at the level of the umbilicus.

The regular waistline is Height in inches/ 2 minus 2 inches. A 5 foot 10 inches tall individual should ideally have a waistline of 33 inches. If it is 4 inches more to a measurement of 37 inches; it suggests that the disease-producing abdominal fat has accumulated. That is a wake-up call to promptly adopt Holistic meal and Balance Lifestyle program (Note: Review this section on the website).

- Blood pressure measurement- Take a minimum of two readings and count the lower one.
- Heart rate measurement- Check for both the rate and regularity.
- Laboratory testing—In the presence of risk factors (Wider waist circumference, high BMI, family history of Type2 diabetes and Heart disease), the following laboratory tests help in early detection of Type 2 diabetes and risk for heart disease :

Fasting Blood Sugar

Hemoglobin A1 C level to check long term blood sugar levels of the past three months.

Urine testing for the presence of sugar

Lipid Profile (Total Cholesterol, HDL Cholesterol, LDL Cholesterol, and Triglyceride level)

2. Wellness Education - This must focus on Healthy foods, a balance in eating and sleeping behaviors, and Physical Activity/ Exercise parameters. Pertinent issues are:

- What to Eat, What not to eat
- When to eat, When not to eat
- How often to eat
- Sleep Hygiene
- Minimum Physical activity and exercise guidelines

(Note: For details review the sections of Holistic Meal & Balanced Lifestyles on this website)

3. Individual counseling for high-risk groups

According to the American Heart Association, the workplace Wellness programs must address the following factors to minimize the risk of heart attacks in high-risk employees:

- Cigarette Smoking-Create smoke-free environment and do individual counseling for smoking cessation.
- Weight reduction- As little as 7-10% (7-10kg) reduction in weight by cutting down refined sugars, refined wheat flour and saturated fats (Meat and Dairy) , and trans fats (refined oils, baked goods and packaged good), can correct Dyslipidemia - abnormal cholesterol profile, decrease blood pressure and control blood sugars within a few weeks.

(Note: Review the sections on Obesity, Type 2 Diabetes and Bad cholesterol on the Website))

4. Physical activity and exercise fitness programs

It is not necessary to have a Gym facility or provide a formal Gym Memberships for employee fitness program. Cultivating the culture of active lifestyle and habit of moderate daily exercise is superior to aerobic routine in a Gym facility 3-4 times a week. What is essential is consistent daily activity and moderate regular exercise. The most cost-effective programs which can bring a cultural shift at the workplace are:

- Walking 7-10,000 steps in the entire day -Frequent mobility during the day keeps metabolic rate high, which means more calorie burning.
- Onsite Yoga and pranayama programs- These come at a fraction of the cost of a gym membership. Set the regular time for this group activity, preferably in the morning or in the early evening.
- Preference for taking the stairs instead of an elevator. - Make it a point to take 3-5 flights of stairs daily based on individual physical fitness. The endurance will build by itself quickly over time.
- Take active mode of transport over door to door service of the automobile- Walking, Bicycle riding (if applicable). Public transportation which involves some walking is an active mode of transport mode. Make it a point to get off some distance from the place of work if you come to work in a private car or public transport to log in additional steps. Build a bicycle path around the periphery

- of the workplace when feasible and keep a few bicycles for the employees to ride around for fitness. It will do wonders for the physical and mental well being of the employees.
- The habit of walking for 10-15 minutes after a meal lowers the blood sugar and is very useful for a person with diabetes.
5. ***Provide financial Incentives and social recognition for employees who participate in and promote the culture of wellness*** — Reward and recognize the employees who make serious effort to improve their overall health- reduce weight and waistline, lower blood sugar and Hemoglobin A1 C numbers, improve their cholesterol profile, etc.
 6. ***Stress Management*** – Review the section of Job Stress and Overwork and Mind-Body Health on the website.
 7. ***Assessment of the impact of Wellness program*** – There are a few different ways the outcome can be measured:
 - Improved productivity and performance
 - Less absenteeism (less sick days off)
 - Less presenteeism – The presenteeism means physically present but not engaged with work intellectually and having a lower level of an accomplishment considering the potential.
 - Improvement in Biometric parameters- That includes weight loss, reduced waist circumference, better control of blood sugars, improved lipid profiles, etc.
 9. ***Self-Assessment Questionnaire –It is a good measure of the outcome for a Grass - Roots Wellness Program***
 - a) I eat healthier foods as outlined in healthy food guidelines
 - b) I am taking fewer or no sick days off.
 - c) I think I am accomplishing more at work.
 - d) I have more energy, am happier and feel good about myself and my health
 - e) My blood pressure and blood sugars are in better control.
 - f) I am losing weight, and my waistline is getting slimmer.
 - g) I have quit smoking or cut down on my smoking
 - h) I have better control over my drinking.
 10. ***Managing Personal Health Records (PHR)*** - For the corporations who provide healthcare benefits to the employees, PHR facilitates the process of medical referrals. The PHR typically include:
 - Health assessment questionnaire (several formats available on the internet –google for Health assessment questionnaire. Select the one you like or make modifications to suit your needs))
 - Physical evaluation – Periodic biometric screening (weight and waistline measurement), Blood Pressure measurements.
 - Periodic blood test results.
 11. ***Medical Referrals to a credible and consistent group of Physicians***

The Employee healthcare coordinator of the organization can help the employee with coordinating a medical referral. It is a good idea for the corporation to retain credible physicians in the community. That way, the employees will feel a sense of belonging and get a prompt and good quality medical care. The corporate voice speaks louder and stronger when negotiating for quality medical teams for their staff.

References:

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