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HEALTH MANAGEMENT PROGRAMS
A DIFFERENT AND NECESSARY APPROACH TO HEALTH CARE

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ABSTRACT

For 40 hours a week, generally for 50 weeks a year, approximately 100 million Americans can be found at a place of work. That is more than enough time for them to develop lifestyle habits--habits that can and do affect both the quality and the length of their lives. Major corporations in the United States have initiated employee health management programs because they are concerned with lifestyle-related illnesses and their associated spiralling medical costs. Kimberly-Clark Corporation, Neenah, Wisconsin, is a company that developed a Health Management Program at a time when they were questioned and considered to be impractical by many. The program has survived to become an industry-wide leader and role model. Their story is well worth sharing.

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In times long past, exercise was a crucial part of man's daily routine because "work" involved the rigorous search for food and shelter. Today, working men and women have to be reminded that, to remain healthy and to develop good lifestyle habits, they must pay attention to their wellness all of the time.

In the quest for a rewarding livelihood, modern man and woman seem to have fallen prone to the great human pastime of breadwinning amidst lack of physical exercise. We set up in the morning, grab our wallets or purses and car keys, drive to our office buildings, where, in many cases, we take the elevator to our desks, grab a cup of coffee and maybe a cigarette, and proceed to sit for most of the day. In our daily routine, there also seems to be plenty of time for mental stress. This is

exhausting . . . and not very healthy.

Work-related time and health-related time is kept, for the most part, in their own time and place. In the corporation world, this tends to be the usual practice. At Kimberly-Clark Corporation in Neenah, Wisconsin, it is quite a different story.

Kimberly-Clark Corporation is an innovative company whose brand name consumer products, such as Kleenex facial tissues and Huggies disposable diapers, are known throughout the world. An Employee Health Management Program was created in 1977 at the company's headquarters in Neenah, Wisconsin, with an initial \$2.5 million investment. At the time, it was one of the most extensive illness prevention programs ever conducted in a company's own facility for a large group of employees.

Mr. Darwin Smith, Chief Executive Officer and Chairman of the Board, remarked at the program's onset, "By conventional standards, we have a good health program. The only trouble is that it places major emphasis on direct medical care--which occurs after an employee becomes ill. We must ask ourselves whether a different approach to health care might prevent illness from happening or at least minimize the effect."

The "different approach," the Health Management Program, has four objectives: (1) to improve employee productivity; (2) to reduce absenteeism; (3) to reduce disease risk factors; and (4) to hold the line on mounting costs of medical insurance. The program's goal has remained the same: to help employees learn more about their own medical health needs and then to offer them alternatives to better, healthier lifestyles based on their own health risk factors.

The Health Management Program accommodates the 4,700 salaried and hourly employees in the Neenah area, as well as retirees and spouses of both employees and retirees. Only spouses of retirees and employees pay a nominal annual fee to participate.

What does an employee experience once he or she enters the program? The first step is a clinical screening which consists of a medical history and health risk profile, scored to indicate his or her level of risk for certain illnesses. Then, the employee undergoes laboratory tests in the multiphasic screening unit, exercise testing by treadmill or bicycle ergometer, and a complete physical examination. Once the test data are in, the employee is given a "wellness prescription" which outlines an exercise program, counseling and/or health education.

Health education classes, activities and projects stress employee awareness of the importance of healthy lifestyles and behavior modification techniques to maintain them. Aerobic dance is one of the most popular classes. Swimming classes are also very popular. Classes have been designed to cover all the dimensions of health and include, for example, Stress Management, Learning to Eat, Humor is My Health and Circuit Weight Trainings for Men and Women.

Employees with cardiovascular or special health problems become involved in our Cardiac Rehabilitation Program. The program was instituted in 1978 and is one of only three or four in-house industrial cardiac rehabilitation programs in the country. Employees, spouses, and retirees attend the medically supervised endurance exercise program which is supervised at all times by a physician, nurse, and the Coordinator of Supervised Exercise.

Another component of the Health Management Program is the Employee Assistance Program. The Employee Assistance program was designed to aid employees, spouses and retirees, with personal problems that interfere with job performance. These problems include alcohol and drug abuse, financial or legal difficulties, family or marital problems. The program also serves as a referral service for special health problems such as alcoholism and mental illness. The program has three full-time counselors. The rehabilitation success rate for those employees with chemical dependency problems with respect to job performance is 65%. Absenteeism and accident data for a group of EAP participants also improved drastically. For a one year period following treatment for chemical dependency, there was a 43% reduction in absenteeism, a 70% reduction in accidents.

The who, what and where's of the Health Management Program at Kimberly-Clark are clearly defined. The Director of Medical Affairs heads the program. He has four deputies who manage specific areas: a Director of the Clinical staff, a Manager of Health Education and Exercise Programs, a Manager of the Employee Assistance Program, and a Supervisor of the Health Services Dispensary Units. There are 19 full-time and 6 part-time health care personnel.

The "where" is a Health Services Center complex which houses a 7,000 square foot multiphasic health testing facility and a 32,000 square foot Exercise Facility. The latter contains a 100-meter track, an exercise equipment room with stationary bicycles, universal weight station, free weights, nordic trac, a group exercise area, sauna, whirlpool, shower and locker rooms. The exercise Facility also includes a 25-meter, 6-lane swimming pool, and outdoors, a running trail which is used for cross country skiing in winter.

Though we are in the midst of a ten- ar program evaluation commitment, we have already seen some important effects that have improved employee morale, improved recruiting efforts and created a fine public image solidified by national exposure by the media. The program has received awards from Blue Cross, American Association of Fitness Directors in Business and Industry, the Washington Business Group on Health, and the American Occupational Medical Association.

CONCLUSION

In a well-structured program such as Kimberly-Clark's Health Management Program, men and women benefit from on-the-job training in healthful living, learning that being healthy does not necessarily have a time and place. It is, after all, an on-going process for both at work and at home. Both employees and employers are finding that a program that decreases lifestyle-related illnesses and the huge medical costs related to them is a different approach--and a necessary approach--to health care.
