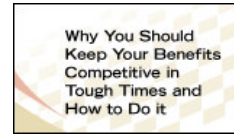




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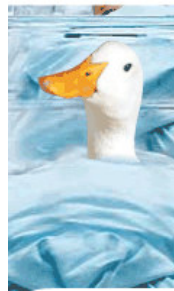
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## Productivity cost of health risks calculated

March 30, 2009

Much work has been done to prove that health management or workplace wellness programs reduce health care costs, but little research has been conducted on how health management is related to workplace productivity. A new study conducted by StayWell Health Management researchers in partnership with John Riedel, a nationally recognized authority on health and productivity, published in the *Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine* has discovered a positive correlation between reducing the number of health risks an individual has and enhancing their productivity.

According to the researchers, the study is significant because it clearly quantifies the impact of healthy lifestyle on a company's bottom line.

"Intuitively, we know that keeping employees healthy is the best way to reduce health care costs, and there's a large body of research in the industry demonstrating this is true," said Riedel. "But until now, we haven't had as much

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data showing that people who have healthy lifestyles with few risk factors are significantly more productive in the workplace than people with high numbers of health risk factors."

More than 770,000 employees from 106 companies participated in the study, which found that those with none of the eight assessed health risks had a productivity loss of 3%, while those with all eight health risks had a 24% loss, or seven times more.

The study broke down the eight assessed risks to measure the influence of each on productivity loss. For example, ongoing back pain accounted for 5.7 weeks of lost productivity each year, representing an 11% differential between employees at risk and those not at risk for back pain.

Mental well-being was responsible for 2.4 weeks in lost productivity and stress for 1.1 weeks. The difference between those of high risk and those of muted risk were 4.6% and 2.2%, respectively.

On average, an employee in the NIF group ("NIF is the amount of on-the-job

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productivity loss that cannot be mitigated through health management interventions that address the eight health risks measured in the study”) with low health risks costs the company \$1,472 per year in lost productivity. A typical employee with three health risks, on the other hand, costs the employer \$5,952 per year in lost productivity. Researchers conjecture that if 100 people with three health risks were to eradicate one risk factor the employer would regain productivity worth \$149,400.

“During a time when health care costs continue to soar and everyone from the small employer on Main Street to leaders in Washington are looking for answers, this study provides additional evidence that prevention generates opportunities for savings—not just in lower health care costs, but in substantial employee productivity gains as well,” said David Anderson, Ph.D., senior vice president and chief health officer at StayWell Health Management. “Now more than ever, employers can’t afford not to invest in the health of their employees by making employee health a core business value. That starts with senior leadership being committed to creating a culture of health in the workplace and extends to the benefits a company offers and to its efforts to be supportive of long-lasting employee health behavior change.”

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