

SHOULDN'T HEALTH BE A MATTER OF PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY?



PROHEALTH CARE

Waukesha Memorial Hospital
Oconomowoc Memorial Hospital
ProHealth Care Medical Centers
West Wood Health & Fitness Center
Medical Associates

Dear Colleagues:

There is a very basic but challenging question facing corporate leaders today – should employers be held responsible for maintaining or improving their employees' health? Shouldn't health be a matter of personal responsibility?

Our response is that good health is a matter of personal responsibility but that employers play a significant role. Most employers already assume the responsibility for the poor health of employees through sponsored health insurance plans. Today, there are many proven ways to manage this risk. It is our contention that, second perhaps only to family, our employers have the ability to influence our personal behavior.

Health claims linked to biggest risks

Working with community-based resources, health plans and provider partners, employers can identify areas of risk in their workforce by conducting health risk assessments and then designing programs to reduce risk. A recent study published in the *American Journal of Health Promotion* states that approximately 25% of all outpatient and inpatient health plan claims for 44,000 employees over a six-year period were related to seven major health risks, the same risks that are the core of most wellness programs.

Senior level support is first step to success

At ProHealth Care, we completed our second year of measuring employee health risk and were pleased to realize a 20% increase in participation. The critical next step is to address identified risks with wellness resources. To succeed, we believe we must first capture senior level support, then create a cohesive wellness team, collect data, craft an operating plan, choose appropriate interventions, create a supportive environment and evaluate outcomes.

Our first focus: metabolic syndrome

Data identified that ProHealth Care employees had higher levels of risk for metabolic syndrome than would be expected, which increases risk for cardiovascular disease and diabetes. In response, we launched an aggressive free program for employees and their spouses to help them make risk-reducing changes in exercise, nutrition and behavior. The results are noticeable as those enrolled in the program have lost weight and decreased their cholesterol and triglyceride levels.

Reduced heart surgeries just one goal

As we look at results like these, we believe it is in the best interest of our employees and our organization to aggressively manage this risk. For instance, we know that 25% of all heart surgery patients among our insured group are diabetic. If we can help even one employee avoid disease that progresses that far, we will have saved three times the cost of the preventive program.

Yes, health is a personal responsibility. And, as employers, we can actively give our employees the resources they need to positively impact their well-being. At ProHealth Care, we are confident that doing so will provide a significant return to both our employees and our organization. We encourage you to consider an investment in the health of your employees by working with local partners, like our own ProHealth Works initiative, to promote health. If you would like to discuss, feel free to call me at (262) 928-2244 or contact our ProHealth Works Employer Relations Specialist Chris Rohde at (262) 928-5743.

Best regards,

Ford Titus, CEO