

Systematic review of employer-sponsored wellness strategies and their economic and health-related outcomes

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Abstract (English): This review determines the characteristics and health-related and economic outcomes of employer-sponsored wellness programs and identifies possible reasons for their success. PubMed, ABI/Inform, and Business Source Premier databases, and Corporate Wellness Magazine were searched. English-language articles published from 2005 to 2011 that reported characteristics of employer-sponsored wellness programs and their impact on health-related and economic outcomes among US employees were accepted. Data were abstracted, synthesized, and interpreted. Twenty references were accepted. Wellness interventions were classified into health assessments, lifestyle management, and behavioral health. Improved economic outcomes were reported (health care costs, return on investment, absenteeism, productivity, workers' compensation, utilization) as well as decreased health risks. Programs associated with favorable outcomes had several characteristics in common. First, the corporate culture encouraged wellness to improve employees' lives, not only to reduce costs. Second, employees and leadership were strongly motivated to support the wellness programs and to improve their health in general. Third, employees were motivated by a participation-friendly corporate policy and physical environment. Fourth, successful programs adapted to the changing needs of the employees. Fifth, community health organizations provided support, education, and treatment. Sixth, successful wellness programs utilized technology to facilitate health risk assessments and wellness education. Improved health-related and economic outcomes were associated with employer-sponsored wellness programs. Companies with successful programs tended to include wellness as part of their corporate culture and supported employee participation in several key ways.

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