

# WHY FOCUS ON WELLNESS?

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# Talk Outline

- Wellness from public health perspective
  - Workplace wellness
  - Employer incentives to pursue employee wellness
  - Keys to successful wellness program
- Tangible reasons to pursue personal wellness

# Workplace Wellness

- Traditionally
  - Workplace health and safety:
    - Reducing work associated injuries
    - Reducing hazardous work exposures
    - Reducing chronic work exposures leading to medical comorbidities

# Wellness

- Growing body of evidence supports the benefits and overall positive effects of personal health and wellness both inside and outside the workplace.

# Incentives for Employers...

- Less Employee Sick Leave
  - Proper, K., et al - survey based study from Netherlands
  - 30 min of vigorous activity 3 times per week associated with less sick days
  - No difference in sick leave between less active and moderately active workers

# Exercise

- American Heart Association
  - Recommendations: per week
    - 150 min - moderate exercise
    - OR
    - 75 min - vigorous exercise

## Vigorous Exercise

- Race walking, jogging, or running
- Swimming laps
- Tennis (singles)
- Aerobic dancing
- Bicycling 10 mph or faster
- Jumping rope
- Heavy gardening (continuous digging or hoeing)
- Hiking uphill or with a heavy backpack

## Moderate Exercise

- Walking briskly (3 miles per hour or faster, but not race-walking)
- Water aerobics
- Bicycling slower than 10 mph
- Tennis (doubles)
- Ballroom dancing
- General gardening

# Employer Incentives... LESS SICK LEAVE

- Neovius, K., et al - systematic review of 36 studies re: obesity and sick days from multiple countries
  - Increased association with obese workers and more sick days
    - United States - Obese workers had 1-3 more sick days than normal weight workers
    - European - Obese workers had 10 more sick days in comparison to normal weight workers

# Employer Wellness Incentives...

## 2. Improved Productivity

- Increased evidence of association between worker health and productivity
- Indirect costs of poor health including absenteeism, disability or reduced work output may be several times higher than direct medical costs
- Productivity losses related to personal and family health problems cost U.S. employers \$1,685 per employee per year, or \$225.8 billion annually



# Employer Wellness Incentives...

Optum Research Study - survey over 1400 U.S. employees from variety of backgrounds

## Key Findings

- 84% believed that workplace wellness programs showed that an employer cared about its employees and that it would increase their productivity
- 82 % who worked at companies with health and wellness programs said such programs would encourage them to stay longer at a company.
- Those who worked in companies that emphasized health felt that they had more control over maintaining a healthy lifestyle at work than those who did not.
- 60% of people surveyed — who had successfully lost weight or quit smoking — reported that a workplace program was very helpful to their success.

# Focusing on Wellness

- Affordable Care Act - Jan 1, 2014
  - Allows financial reward up to 30% of the cost of coverage for meeting certain health status standards
  - Rules for Wellness Programs -45 CFR Parts 146 and 147
    - must be reasonably designed to promote health or prevent disease;
    - must have a reasonable chance of improving the health of, or preventing disease in participating individuals
    - cannot be overly burdensome
    - cannot be a stratagem for discriminating based on a health factor
    - must use a reasonable method to promote health or prevent disease.

# Motivating Wellness: WHPP

- Employer Stimulated
  - Controversial
  - Monetary benefits
    - Discounted insurance premiums
  - Monetary penalties
    - Penn State issued \$1200 fine/yr to faculty for non-compliance with wellness program
    - Fine eventually dropped after backlash
  - Pre-employment Screening
    - Refusing to hire smokers (Cleveland Clinic)

# Workplace Wellness

- **Vikram Khanna** – author and healthcare consultant
  - Has been critical of workplace health programs
  - Co-author of, “Surviving Workplace Wellness ... with Your Dignity, Finances, and Major Organs Intact”



*“The successful long-term pursuit of health within a company is exactly like it is within a family: create positive atmospherics, make choosing healthy the right, easy and happy thing to do, and have leaders who live and breathe the philosophy, with no expectation other than that their people will feel better and appreciate the support. Not a single one of those things has any legal impediments.”*

# Keys to Success for WHPP

- Focus on doing wellness FOR the employees, not TO your employees
- Make positive lifestyle and behavior choices easy
  - Ex. subsidizing produce and non-caloric beverages in the workplace
  - DASH diet catering for corporate events
- Create time and space for exercise
- Stick with providing basic, consensus, evidence based, age and gender specific immunizations and screenings.
- Increased focus on facilitating an environment of personal growth and responsibility
- Do NOT forget that health involves not only physical, but also mental and spiritual health as well
  - Nap time vs more coffee?
  - Planned events (cookouts, etc.)
  - Educational events (i.e. catered lunch with speaker on health topic)

# Google as The Best

- Fortune.com - Google rated best place to work for 6 years

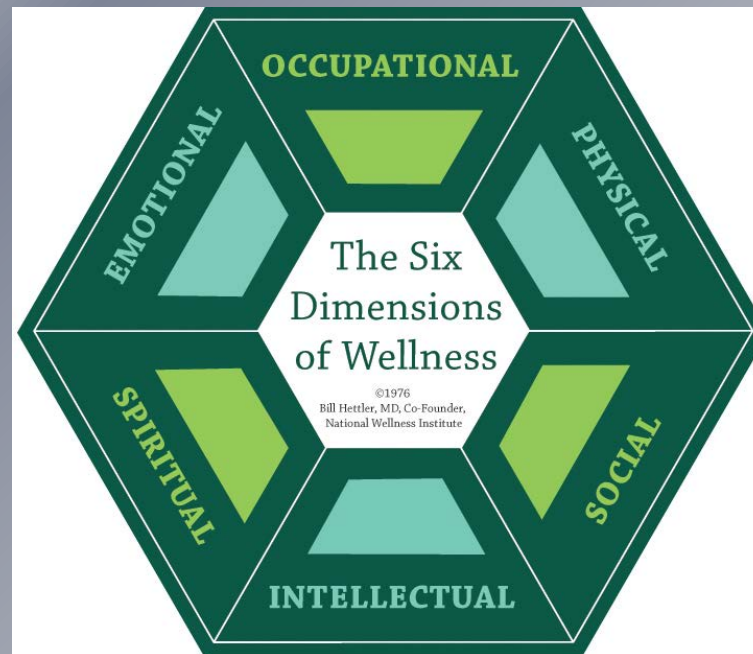


# "Tangible" reasons to pursue a healthy lifestyle

1. You are more agile
2. Breathing is easier
3. Walking is effortless
4. Less back, knee, hip, and foot pain
5. Clothing fits and easier to buy
6. Increased self-esteem and respect
7. More energy, and better sleep
8. Increased acceptance by others
9. Easier to fit into seats of airplanes, cars, and theaters
10. Relieves depression and anxiety

# Why Focus on Wellness?

- My Opinion:
  - “To focus one’s life daily with a balanced approach on all dimensions of wellness will undoubtedly allow for one’s advancement in their pursuit of happiness”



- “Happiness, then, is found to be something perfect and self-sufficient, being the end to which our actions are directed.”
  - Aristotle (*The Nicomachean Ethics*)