

Letter from the Medical Director

James Butler, M.D.

Last week at the start of the H1N1 (then called Swine Flu), I was in San Diego at a conference of Occupational Medicine specialists. We are certified as first Preventive Medicine specialists, then in Occupational Medicine. So, naturally, the newly emerging epidemic was on everyone's mind. Many of us had companies calling regularly for information, updates and planning documents. We were all concerned about the amount of mass hysteria that was occurring and the uncertainty of where it was all headed.



The one overriding rule all of us imparted to everyone was to use common sense. It is sensible to use personal hygiene practices in this global world. It is common sense to avoid crowded settings if you have a fever and symptoms of a communicable disease. (I understand that is a problem for companies without sick days, or if the employee has used all of theirs.) It is common sense to have a plan for company operations in the event that most workers are off sick or God forbid they have to be quarantined.

As we have fortunately seen as of this writing, the Flu continues to spread worldwide, but in a milder form than expected. It has shown us though that we need to be prepared for any eventuality. On a regular cycle you, or someone in your company, should look at your contingency plans and update them. There will be more such scares in this world where Chengdu is almost as close as Owensboro. Be prepared, but always use common sense. We are available to help with your planning if necessary.

Great news, Dr. Price has received his Certificate of Added Qualification in Occupational Medicine.

Have a safe, injury free day.

Psychologically Healthy Workplaces Rewarded With Positive Outcomes

Companies that continue to invest in their employees during tough economic times reap intrinsic and financial rewards, according to the American Psychological Association (APA). At a recent Psychologically Healthy Workplace Awards ceremony, five organizations were recognized by the APA for comprehensive efforts to promote employee health and well-being while enhancing organizational performance.

“While there is no denying that the current economic downturn may necessitate some belt-tightening, employers should be careful not to secure this quarter's financial returns at the expense of employee well-being or the organization's long-term success,” said David Ballard, Psy.D., the APA's assistant executive director for corporate relations and business strategy.

The 2009 Psychologically Healthy Workplace Award winners are WR Systems, Ltd., Engineering Services Division, Virginia; Replacements, Ltd., North Carolina; Teledyne

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Psychologically Healthy Workplaces

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Brown Engineering, Huntsville Headquarters, Alabama; WorldatWork, Arizona; and Sandia Preparatory School, New Mexico.

These five organizations reported an average turnover rate of 11 percent in 2008. By comparison, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics estimates the national average turnover rate at 39 percent.

In other findings:

- 25 percent of employees in the award-winning companies reported experiencing chronic work stress, compared to 39 percent nationally.
- 85 percent of employees reported being satisfied with their jobs, compared to 61 percent nationally.
- 87 percent of employees said they would recommend their organizations to others as a good place to work, compared to 44 percent nationally.
- five percent said they intend to seek employment elsewhere within the next year, compared to 32 percent nationally.

“The five award winners have implemented a comprehensive set of programs and policies designed to optimize outcomes for both employee and employer,” Dr. Ballard said. “Their efforts demonstrate that any type of organization, large or small, has the power and the responsibility to create a psychologically healthy workplace.”

Outcomes Reported

The APA has developed five categories for psychologically healthy workplace practices: employee involvement; health and safety; employee growth and development; work-life balance; and employee recognition.

Employee participation in decision making, skills training and leadership development, flexible work arrangements and programs promoting healthy lifestyle and behavior choices are examples of practices found to contribute to a psychologically healthy workplace. By employing these and other related strategies, the award winners report the following outcomes:

1. Teledyne Brown Engineering’s wellness program is associated with a 34 percent reduction in absenteeism. Employees who participate in the program use a third fewer sick days than those who do not.
2. WorldatWork attributes employees’ ability to decrease body mass, cholesterol, blood pressure and glucose

levels to a healthy, supportive and flexible work environment.

3. Replacements, Ltd. cites an average tenure of longer than eight years. When surveyed, 93 percent of employees said they feel their jobs are important to the company and 91 percent care about the organization.
4. Sandia Preparatory School says psychological health reduces absenteeism, which in turn cuts costs because substitute teachers are not needed as often and fewer employees use up their sick time.
5. WR Systems reports that its programs contribute to low accident and injury rates and a high rate of employee retention.

Award History

Psychologically healthy company awards have been presented to organizations by state, provincial and territorial psychological associations in North America for the past decade. Award nominees are selected from a pool of local winners and evaluated on their workplace programs and policies. Awards are given to for-profit and not-for-profit organizations, as well as government, military and educational institutions.

For more information, visit www.phwa.org. A focus on supporting and improving employee health distinguishes high-performing companies from low-performing ones, survey findings show.

Employee Health a Differentiator for High-Performing Companies

In its 20th annual *Health Care Cost Survey – the Health Dividend: Capturing the Value of Employee Health*, Towers Perrin, a global professional services firm, compares results from 609 predominantly Fortune 1000 companies in terms of their relative healthcare expenditures and ability to achieve benefit objectives.

Understanding linkages between workforce health and well-being and business vitality has never been more essential: U.S. corporations will spend, on average, an estimated \$9,552 per employee for health benefits this year, an increase of six percent compared to 2008, according to the survey.

High performers commit to “rigorous and continuous management” of health plans and delivery processes and share cost savings with employees. Rather than focus on managing the cost of illness, these companies “balance

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Government Watchdog

E-Verify Program Continued

The budget signed by President Obama reauthorizes the E-Verify immigration database through September 30. E-Verify is a web-based service for employers that compares information on I-9 forms with Homeland Security and Social Security Administration data to verify whether a worker is legally eligible to work in the U.S. Employer groups have filed a lawsuit to stop the rule on the grounds that it could expose employers to lawsuits filed by workers who feel they were discriminated against on the basis of race or national origin.

EEOC Reports Activity

The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) is seeking public comment on implementation of the Genetic Information Non-Discrimination Act of 2008 (GINA). The commission is charged with issuing regulations by May 21 to implement Title II of GINA, which prohibits the use of genetic information in employment and imposes strict confidentiality requirements.

Meanwhile, workplace discrimination charges filed with the EEOC rose 15 percent (95,402 filings) in Fiscal Year 2008. Charges based on age and retaliation had the most significant percentage increases, while allegations based on race, sex and retaliation continued as the most frequently filed charges. For enforcement and litigation statistics, visit www.eeoc.gov.

Free Choice Act

The Employee Free Choice Act (EFCA) has been introduced in both houses of Congress amid threats of strong opposition from business leaders. The legislation is intended to remove barriers to union representation and collective bargaining agreements. Alternative legislation, the Secret Ballot Protection Act, also has been introduced in both houses.

Job Funding

Under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, the U.S. Department of Labor will invest major funding in programs to help Americans get back to work through a national network of One-Stop Career Centers. Target populations include low-income, low-skilled Americans and youth seeking summer employment. Visit www.servicelocator.org and <http://careeronestop.org>.

Protective Policies Promoted

Occupational, environmental and other health specialists from the U.S. and abroad are joining forces in an attempt to persuade Congress to adopt more rigorous protective policies on workplace and environmental hazards. Many

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Heat Injury Prevention

Jonathan R.C. Green, PA-C, MPH

The temperature outside is going up and so is the risk of heat injury. Heat injuries can be relatively mild, like leg cramps, or they can be life-threatening, like heat stroke. Even if workers don't get an OSHA-recordable heat injury, heat stress can degrade their job performance and lead to accidents. The U.S. Army did a study of heat stress and found that soldiers who were 6% dehydrated showed a 20% decrement in marksmanship (and presumably other tasks that require good reaction time, cognition, judgment, etc.).

You can lower the risk of heat injuries among your employees by following these common-sense guidelines:

- (1) Schedule the hottest tasks for the coolest parts of the work day (usually early morning). Avoid assigning strenuous tasks during times when your shadow is shorter than you are (usually between 10:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m.).
- (2) Pay attention to weather reports, especially the heat index, and try to schedule the most strenuous tasks on days that are cooler and less humid. You can find a heat index chart at www.weather.gov/om/heat/index.shtml.
- (3) Make sure that rest breaks are at least 15 minutes long. Core body temperature continues to rise for three to five minutes after ceasing activity.
- (4) Make sure your workers have access to plenty of cool fluids to drink. Water is best, but its lack of flavor may keep them from drinking enough of it. See if they can get flavored fluids (e.g. Crystal Lite®), but not fluids with caffeine or excessive sugar.
- (5) Assign extra workers for especially strenuous tasks when it's hot.
- (6) Be especially vigilant with workers who are at increased risk of heat injury, such as those who are overweight and/or have poor physical conditioning, are short of sleep, have heart diseases or diabetes, or have had a previous heat injury.

Workers can avoid becoming heat casualties by following this advice:

- (1) Drink plenty of cool fluids. Don't wait until you get thirsty, because by then you are already a quart-and-a-half low.
- (2) Go easy on caffeinated beverages. If you want a cup or two of coffee to get going in the morning, that's okay, but switch to decaf after that. If you want to drink sodas, drink those without caffeine, such as Sprite® or Seven-Up®.

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St. Mary's Occupational Medicine Lunch Seminar

"Sleep Apnea and the DOT"

Wednesday, June 24, 2009

11:00 AM - Registration and Lunch

11:30 AM - Presentation

12:30 PM - Adjournment

St. Mary's Manor – Annex

(Across from St. Mary's Emergency Room)

St. Mary's Campus

3700 Washington Avenue; Evansville, IN 47750

(Map on Back)

Registration

Please see registration
information on back

Presented by

Robert N. Pope, MD, Medical Director,

St. Mary's Sleep Disorder Center

Diplomate, American Board of Sleep Medicine

And

James W. Butler, MD MPH, Medical Director,

St. Mary's Occupational Medicine



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See Registrion Form on back page of this newsletter.

Psychologically Healthy Workplaces

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affordability objectives with efforts to prevent illness and promote health,” the report states. “High performers make good health part of the organization’s fabric and identity.”

Results show that high-performing companies will pay, on average, 12 percent less in annual health care premiums in 2009 than low-performing companies. High-performing companies report a per-employee cost of \$8,904, compared to \$10,104 among low-performing companies. High performers using account-based benefit plans and other consumer-driven approaches also will save more.

How Do High Performers Get Results?

What do high-performing companies do to achieve superior results? According to Towers Perrin, they:

1. Demonstrate their interest in employee well-being.
2. Build linkages between workforce health and business results.
3. Ensure that key success factors such as leadership involvement are firmly in place.
4. Engage employees and promote a culture of health.
5. Invest in a broad range of existing and emerging health management programs.
6. Design and price “transparent” programs with appropriate incentives.
7. Measure program and vendor performance against goals.
8. Act on plans to address gaps and opportunities.
9. Are sensitive to affordability issues in the workforce.
10. Proactively profile employees’ health status and risk factors.

Source: www.towersperrin.com

Government Watchdog

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groups have sent white papers to Washington in support of “placing the needs of the public above those of special interest contributors when it comes to health,” said Kathleen Burns, Ph.D., director, Sciencecorps, Lexington, Mass.

Respiratory Protection Targeted

The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health has proposed quality assurance and control requirements for manufacturers of respirators approved under 42 CFR Part 84: *Approval of Respiratory Protective Devices*. Visit www.cdc.gov/niosh/docket.

Heat Injury Prevention

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- (3) If you were drinking alcohol the previous evening, make sure you have at least a little something to eat the next morning and start drinking more (non-alcoholic) fluids earlier in the day.
- (4) Take your rest breaks in the shade, if possible.
- (5) Wear loose, light clothing. Don’t go without a shirt because then you won’t realize how much you have been sweating and may forget to drink more fluids.
- (6) If you have to wear thick, protective clothing or equipment on the job, remember that your risk of heat injury increases, and you need to take more precautions against it.
- (7) Use the buddy system. Check out your coworkers frequently and make them rest and drink fluids if they start to show signs of heat injury.
- (8) You can get an OSHA Quick Card detailing the signs and symptoms of heat injury and preventive measures at www.osha.gov/Publications/osha3154.html. A word of caution, however; if a worker has sustained a heat injury, the presence or absence of sweating is a highly **unreliable** indicator of whether he/she has heat stroke. Mental status is a much better guide. If the worker is confused, disoriented or unconscious, assume that it is heat stroke and take him/her immediately to the nearest hospital **Emergency Room** (NOT to this clinic).

Mr. Green has worked as a physician assistant at St. Mary’s Occupational Medicine Clinic since retiring from the U.S. Army in 1998.

Resource Directory

Imaging strategies for low-back pain: systematic review and meta-analysis; study shows routine imaging to assess acute or sub-acute low back pain holds no clinically relevant benefits for patient outcomes; R Chou et. al; The Lancet, Vol. 373, Issue 9662, February 2009.

Screening for Obstructive Sleep Apnea During Commercial Driver Medical Examinations; this study supports screening validity; P Parks, et. al; Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine, Vol. 51, Issue 3, March 2009.

Universal Patient Compact, a national effort to encourage collaboration among patients, families and their health care providers introduced by the National Patient Safety Foundation; www.npsf.org.

Occupational Medicine Lunch Seminar

Registration

Please fax this form to 485-6930 or call 485-6959. Please RSVP by June 19, 2009.

We look forward to seeing you!

Company: _____ Name: _____

Telephone: _____

Name of person(s) attending:

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