

Worksite Wellness Programs

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1. Introduction

There is an increase the last decade in the number of companies offering worksite wellness programs for high-risk employees declared unfit for duty, as a way to improve their work capacity and accelerate return to work (Aldana, 2001:296; Golaszewski, 2001:332; O'Donnell, 2003:xiv; Darling, 2005:52; Serxner *et al.*, 2007:1). These programs offered to employees focus on a total wellness approach in reducing risk and improving productivity, and not merely directed to physical fitness per se (Aldana, 2001:296; Golaszewski, 2001:332; O'Donnell, 2002:xv; Serxner *et al.*, 2007:1). Due to the diverse understanding of the term "wellness", it is necessary to define wellness in the context of this study and will be briefly discussed.

2. Wellness defined

The World Health Organization states that health goes beyond disease management and includes optimal physical, spiritual and social well-being. Their definition for health that has not been amended since 1948 is:

"health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity"

(Preamble to the Constitution of the World Health Organization as adopted by the International Health Conference, New York, 19-22 June, 1946; signed on 22 July 1946 by the representatives of 61 States and entered into force on 7 April 1948). There are similarities between the official definition of "health" by the World Health Organization and Merriam-Webster's collegiate online dictionary definition of "wellness", namely:

"the quality or state of being in good health especially as an actively sought goal"

(Merriam-Webster, 2007, www.merriam-webster.com). Figure 1 displays the search result on the Merriam-Webster’s collegiate online dictionary.

One entry found for **wellness**.

Main Entry: **well·ness**
 Pronunciation: 'wel-n&s
 Function: *noun*
 : the quality or state of being in good health especially as an actively sought goal <wellness clinics> <lifestyles that promote wellness>

Figure 1. Definition of wellness according to the Merriam-Webster’s collegiate online dictionary

Both these definitions refer to wellness as a *quality state of life*. Travis & Ryan (1988:xvii) explains this state of wellness with a illness/wellness-continuum (see Figure 1). According to the authors, wellness is not a static state where one is either well or ill; rather, there are levels of wellness, just as there are levels of illness. High-level wellness is situated at one end of the continuum, while premature death is located at the other end. “Moving toward high-level wellness will involve the three steps of awareness, education, and growth” (Travis & Ryan, 1988:xvii).

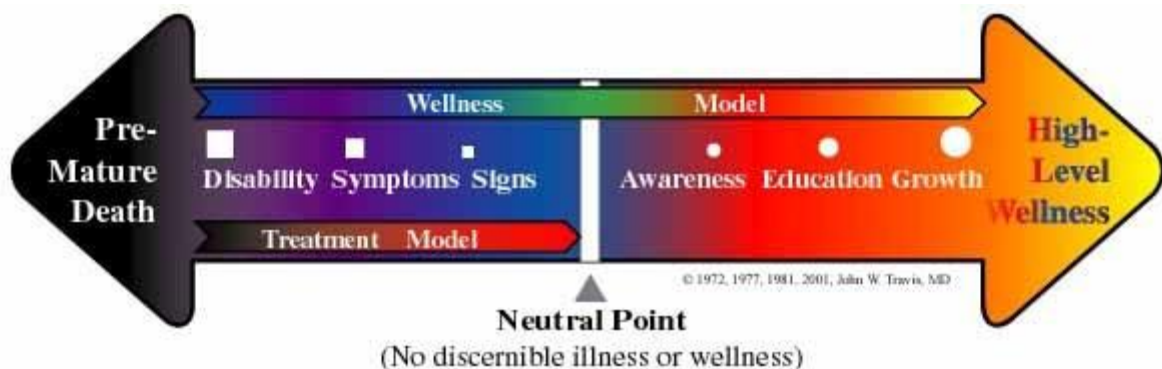


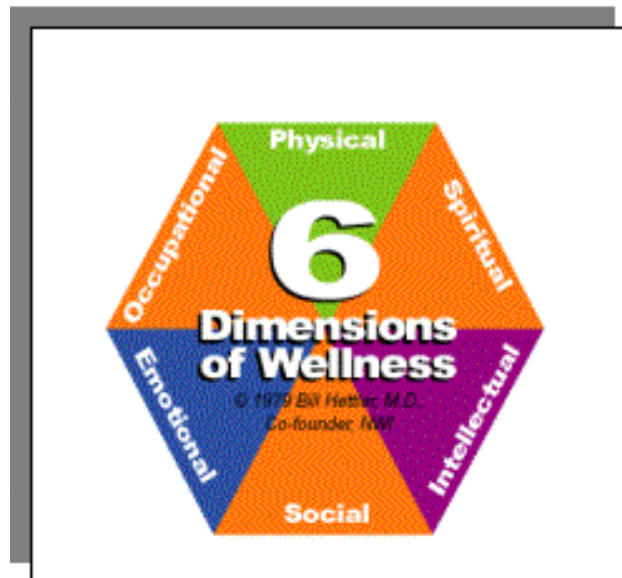
Figure 1. The illness/wellness continuum

Wellness is not a static state. High-level wellness involves giving good care to your physical self, using your mind constructively, expressing your emotions effectively, being creatively involved with those around you, and being concerned about your physical, psychological and spiritual environments (Travis & Ryan, 1988:xvii).

According to Dreyer several researchers have set out to describe the concept of “wellness” with some sort of model (Dreyer, 1996:30-39). Two of these models will be briefly discussed. The first model is arguably the model out of which most other models originate, namely the National Wellness Institute’s 6 dimensions of wellness and secondly the Wellness Model of Eskom Holdings (Pty) Ltd. which is the model used with relevance to this study.

2.1 The National Wellness Institute’s 6 dimensions of wellness

The 6 dimensions of wellness model developed in 1977 by Dr. Bill Hettler, Cofounder and President of the Board of Directors of the National Wellness Institute are one of the most internationally used models that has been adopted by many university, corporate, and public health programs (Health promotion advocates, www.healthpromotionadvocates.org). This interdependent model is displayed in figure 2, and is referred to as the 6 Dimensions of Wellness. Each of the 6 dimensions will be briefly discussed (Hettler, www.nationalwellness.org).



Source: HETTLER, B. 2007. The six dimensional wellness model. National Wellness Institute. http://www.nationalwellness.org/index.php?id=391&id_tier=381. Date of access: 10 August 2007.

Figure 2. Hettler's 6 Dimensions of Wellness

- **Social**

The social dimension encourages contributing to one's environment and community. It emphasizes the interdependence between others and nature. As you travel a wellness path, you'll become more aware of your importance in society as well as the impact you have on multiple environments. You'll take an active part in improving our world by encouraging healthier living and initiating better communication with those around you. You'll actively seek ways to preserve the beauty and balance of nature along the pathway as you discover the power to make wilful choices to enhance personal relationships, important friendships, and build a better living space and community. Social wellness follows these tenets:

- It is better to contribute to the common welfare of our community than to think only of ourselves.
- It is better to live in harmony with others and our environment than to live in conflict with them (Hettler, 2007:www.nationalwellness.org).

- **Occupational**

The occupational dimension recognizes personal satisfaction and enrichment in one's life through work. At the centre of occupational wellness is the premise that occupational development is related to one's attitude about one's work. Travelling a path toward your occupational wellness, you'll contribute your unique gifts, skills and talents to work that is both personally meaningful and rewarding. You'll convey your values through your involvement in activities that are gratifying for you. The choice of profession, job satisfaction, career ambitions, and personal performance are all important components of your path's terrain. Occupational wellness follows these tenets:

- It is better to choose a career which is consistent with our personal values interests and beliefs than to select one that is unrewarding to us.
- It is better to develop functional, transferable skills through structured involvement opportunities than to remain inactive and uninvolved (Hettler, 2007:www.nationalwellness.org).

- **Spiritual**

The spiritual dimension recognizes our search for meaning and purpose in human existence. It includes the development of a deep appreciation for the depth and expanse of life and natural forces that exist in the universe. Your search will be

characterized by a peaceful harmony between internal personal feelings and emotions and the rough and rugged stretches of your path. While travelling the path, you may experience many feelings of doubt, despair, fear, disappointment and dislocation as well as feelings of pleasure, joy, happiness and discovery - these are all important experiences and components to your search and will be displayed in the value system you will adapt to bring meaning to your existence. You'll know you're becoming spiritually well when your actions become more consistent with your beliefs and values, resulting in a "world view." Spiritual wellness follows these tenets:

- It is better to ponder the meaning of life for ourselves and to be tolerant of the beliefs of others than to close our minds and become intolerant.
- It is better to live each day in a way that is consistent with our values and beliefs than to do otherwise and feel untrue to ourselves (Hettler, 2007:www.nationalwellness.org).

- **Physical**

The physical dimension recognizes the need for regular physical activity. Physical development encourages learning about diet and nutrition while discouraging the use of tobacco, drugs and excessive alcohol consumption. Optimal wellness is met through the combination of good exercise and eating habits, As you travel the wellness path, you'll strive to spend time building physical strength, flexibility and endurance while also taking safety precautions so you may travel your path successfully, including medical self-care and appropriate use of a medical system. The physical dimension of wellness entails personal responsibility and care for minor illnesses and also knowing when professional medical attention is needed. By travelling the wellness path, you'll be able to monitor your own vital signs and understand your body's warning signs. You'll understand and appreciate the

relationship between sound nutrition and how your body performs. The physical benefits of looking good and feeling terrific most often lead to the psychological benefits of enhanced self-esteem, self-control, determination and a sense of direction. Physical wellness follows these tenets:

- It is better to consume foods and beverages that enhance good health rather than those which impair it.
- It is better to be physically fit than out of shape (Hettler, 2007:www.nationalwellness.org).

- **Intellectual**

The intellectual dimension recognizes one's creative, stimulating mental activities. A well person expands their knowledge and skills while discovering the potential for sharing their gifts with others. Using intellectual and cultural activities in the classroom and beyond the classroom combined with the human resources and learning resources available within the university community and the larger community, a well person cherishes intellectual growth and stimulation. Travelling a wellness path, you'll explore issues related to problem solving, creativity, and learning. You'll spend more time pursuing personal interests, reading books, magazines, and newspapers, while keeping abreast of current issues and ideas. As you develop your intellectual curiosity, you'll actively strive to expand and challenge your mind with creative endeavours. Intellectual wellness follows these tenets:

- It is better to stretch and challenge our minds with intellectual and creative pursuits than to become self-satisfied and unproductive.
- It is better to identify potential problems and choose appropriate courses of action based on available information than to wait, worry and contend with major concerns later (Hettler, 2007:www.nationalwellness.org).

- **Emotional**

The emotional dimension recognizes awareness and acceptance of one's feelings. Emotional wellness includes the degree to which one feels positive and enthusiastic about oneself and life. It includes the capacity to manage one's feelings and related behaviours including the realistic assessment of one's limitations, development of autonomy, and ability to cope effectively with stress. The well person maintains satisfying relationships with others. Awareness of, and accepting a wide range of feelings in yourself and others is essential to wellness. On the wellness path, you'll be able to express feelings freely and manage feelings effectively. You'll be able to arrive at personal choices and decisions based upon the synthesis of feelings, thoughts, philosophies, and behaviour. You'll live and work independently while realizing the importance of seeking and appreciating the support and assistance of others. You'll be able to form interdependent relationships with others based upon a foundation of mutual commitment, trust and respect. You'll take on challenges, take risks, and recognize conflict as being potentially healthy. Managing your life in personally rewarding ways, and taking responsibility for your actions, will help you see life as an exciting, hopeful adventure. Emotional wellness follows these tenets:

- It is better to be aware of and accept our feelings than to deny them.
- It is better to be optimistic in our approach to life than pessimistic (Hettler, 2007:www.nationalwellness.org).
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2.2 The Wellness Model of Eskom Holdings (Pty) Ltd.

The Wellness Model of Eskom Holdings (Pty) Ltd. developed by Lubbe (1997) is illustrated in Figure 3. According to this model there are three primary dimensions namely body, mind and soul that are inter-connected to each other (Lubbe, 1997). The interaction of these dimensions, just as the effect of colors mixing, shapes and influences the secondary dimensions namely, social, occupational, emotional (Lubbe, 1997).

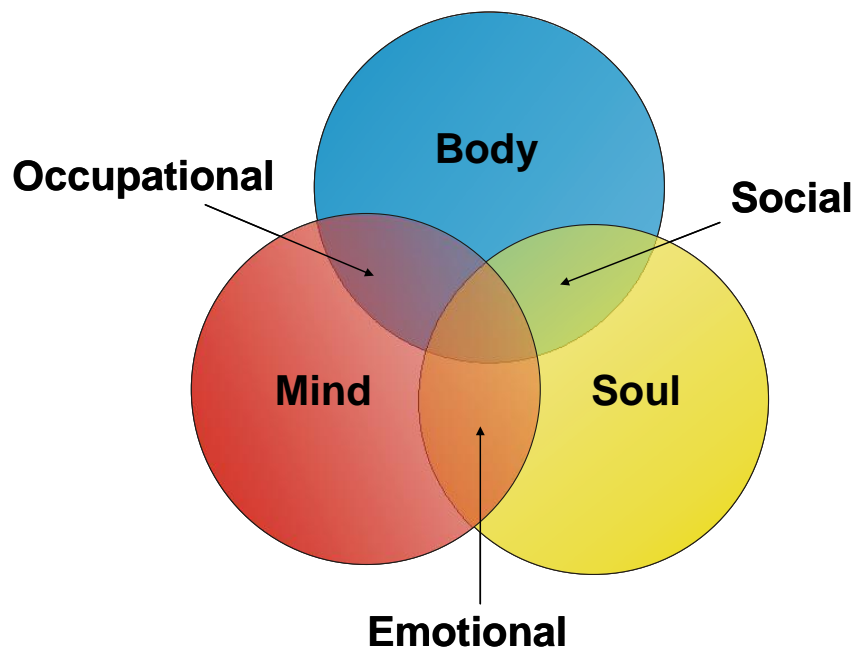


Figure 3. Eskom Wellness Model

Source: LUBBE, J.P.H. 1997. Wellness model. In: Eskom Holdings (Pty) Ltd. Wellness workshop.

- **Body**

Body wellness is the optimal physical functioning of the body. It is a person's ability to function effectively in meeting the demands of the day's work and ability to use free time effectively.

- **Mind**

Mind wellness is the continuous process to enhance knowledge, insight and wisdom. It is a person's ability to learn and to use information to enhance the quality of daily living and optimal functioning.

- **Soul**

Soul wellness is the way you see yourself in the world you exist in. It is a person's ability to establish a values system and act on the system of beliefs and carry out meaningful and constructive lifetime goals.

- **Occupational**

Occupational wellness is a person's ability to perform at an optimal level in the work environment as well as experiencing job satisfaction.

- **Social**

Social wellness is a person's ability to successfully interact with others and to establish meaningful relationships that enhance the quality of life for all people involved in the interaction (including self).

- **Emotional**

Emotional wellness is a person's ability to cope with daily circumstances and to deal with personal feelings in a positive, optimistic and constructive manner.

3. Worksite wellness programs defined

In the same way that there is a diverse understanding of the term “wellness”, the application of it in worksite programs could have different forms and focuses. Therefore it is necessary to define a “worksite wellness program” in the context as it is applied in this study. Cox (2003:7) defines a worksite wellness program as a:

“comprehensive, multidisciplinary, and complex field that seeks to promote, improve, and optimize health, well-being, and performance of those associated with a place of employment”.

There are similarities in the definition of Cox and Opatz (1985:61) that defines it as:

“the systematic efforts of an organization to enhance the wellness of its members through education, behavioural change and cultural support”.

Both of these definitions strive to enhance and sustain the wellbeing of the workers at the worksite. Robison (2004:8) indicate that these worksite programs move away from the traditional biomechanical view of health towards a holistic health promotion approach. In Table 1 the two approaches are contrasted.

These programmes according to Robison (2004:8) provides the worksite professionals with an opportunity to support people’s health and human needs in a more compassionate effective way, instead of focusing on controlling, isolated symptomatic illnesses or behaviours. Program participants then have the unique opportunity to heal their symptoms while also developing a deeper understanding of the underlying life struggles that these symptoms represent (Robison, 2004:8).

Table 1. Comparison of health promotion approaches

	Traditional	Holistic
Focus	Disease: Main objective is to identify and eliminate biomedical risk factors for physical disease	Health: Main objective is to address the interconnected web of genetic, social, emotional, spiritual, and physical factors that contribute to health
Emphasis	“Unhealthy” Behaviors: Poor individual lifestyle choices are considered the primary determinants of sickness and disease	Meaning and support: Meaning in life, relationships, work, and supportive human systems are considered the primary determinants of health
Motivation	Fear: Reason for change is primarily to prevent disease and premature death	Happiness: Reason for change is primarily to enhance a sense of purpose and enjoyment of life
Primary Assumption	People are Bad: Left to their own devices, people will naturally gravitate toward “unhealthy” behaviors	People are good: People have a natural desire to and ability to seek out healthy behaviors
Professional role	Expert: Primary job is to police behaviors and prescribe changes to save people from themselves	Ally: Primary job is to facilitate people’s reconnection with their own internal wisdom about their body and their life
Change Process	Controlling Behavior: Behavior change techniques are used to suppress or eliminate targeted behaviors	Creating Consciousness: People are assisted in understanding and healing life issues that underline illness and behavioral struggles

Source: ROBISON, J. 2004. Toward a new science. *WELCOA’s absolute advantage magazine*, 3(7):2-5.

4. Reasons why the worksite is ideal for wellness programs

Dreyer (1996:104-108) provides the following reasons why the worksite is ideal for wellness enhancement programs:

- the employees are “trapped” at work and subjected to cultural influences
- the workplace provide opportunity for incentives as a motivation to change
- the workplace provides the employer with the opportunity to expose the employee to an intervention program over a long period of time
- the workplace provides the opportunity for social support
- the lifestyle of workers’ families will probably also be influenced
- the employer and employee could benefit from these programs.

5. Best practices in worksite wellness programs

Programs that experience long-term success and are consistently recognized as “best practice” programs share a set of common characteristics (Huber *et al.*, 2003:7; Chapman, 2004:1-6; Darling, 2005:50; Goetzel *et al.*, 2005:12; Hunnicutt, 2006:AA2). According to the literature the following best practices characteristics are central elements of a worksite wellness program:

- Building top management support (Allen, 2002; Chapman, 2004:1-6; Hunnicutt, 2006:4).
- Integrating program with organizational/business goals (Huber *et al.*, 2003:14; Chapman, 2004:1-6; Goetzel *et al.*, 2005:12; Darling, 2005:51).

- Sound communication process (Chapman, 2004:1-6; Darling, 2005:51).
- Uses of the stages of change concept (Prochaska & DiClemente, 1983:390-395; Levesque et al., 1999:226-241).
- Creating supportive cultures (Allen & Kraft, 1980:257; Allen, 2003:202-217; O'Donnell, 2003:xxiii).
- Incentive recruitment procedures (Chapman, 2005:189; Hunnicutt & Chapman, 2005:1-62; Chapman, 2006:431-432).
- Targeted personal communication (Lubbe, 2004a:6-8; Darling, 2005:51; Goetzel *et al.*, 2005:14).
- Measurement of results (Aldana, 2001:296-320; Edington, 2001:341-349; Ozminkowski & Goetzel, 2001:289-291; Chapman, 2005:1-14; Goetzel *et al.*, 2005:14).
- Creating a cohesive wellness team (Allen & Kraft, 1980:181-183; Huber et al., 2003:11; Hunnicutt, 2006:8).

6. Examples of worksite wellness programs in the private and public sector

Private and public organizations are searching for strategies to improve workforce health and wellness on the job and at home (Darling, 2005:52). The best practice programs in both the public and private sectors have been recognized for their achievement — for example, the American College of Occupational and Environmental Medicine (ACOEM) recognizes organizations with exemplary employee health and occupational and environmental medicine practices with its Corporate Health Achievement Award (CHAA) (ACOEM, 2004: www.chaa.org). Recipients of the CHAA may serve as model programs that demonstrate successful integration of health, safety and employee well-being to improve productivity and accomplish organizational goals. The programs of three organizations that have

received this prestigious award, namely Union Pacific Corporation, The Dow Chemical Company, and Johnson & Johnson will be briefly discussed as presented by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce (2005: www.prevent.org). The program of one of South Africa's leading organizations in the field of worksite wellness, namely Eskom Holdings (Pty) Ltd. will also be presented.

6.1 Union Pacific Corporation: HealthTrack

- **Program overview**

- Number of employees: 48,000.
- Available to all employees and their spouses.

- **Program goals**

- Return shareholder value.
- Make Union Pacific a place where employees are proud to work.
- Impact safety and health care claims related to lifestyle.
- Raise awareness and eliminate risk factors for diabetes, asthma, smoking, inactivity, overweight, high cholesterol, high blood pressure, fatigue, stress, and depression.

- **Program components**

- A Wellness assessment.
- Follow-up programs including independent study guides, stage-based mailings, telephonic health coaches, videos, tobacco cessation program, and lifestyle management classes.
- System Health Facilities consisting of more than 535 contracted fitness facilities providing free exercise opportunities for our employees.

- Know Your Numbers, a general education program highlighting important numerical values associated with health.
- An incentive program that is integrated into *IdeaWorks*, the company's employee reward and recognition process.

- **Key findings**
 - A 10% reduction in lifestyle-related health care claims.

 - and depression.

- **Message from the CEO**

Dick Davidson, Chairman, President, and CEO say:

“Wellness and related safety initiatives are integral parts of Union Pacific’s business strategy. At Union Pacific, we believe that if promoting wellness is implemented as a strategy, it should be managed like any other facet of the business and integrated into the corporate culture. By investing in a wellness program, we are protecting our most important asset—our employees. “We have seen good results from our wellness program and safety initiatives, including a 10 percent reduction in lifestyle related health care claims and the integration of health promotion into our safety and benefits design initiatives. An aging workforce and continued health care cost increases, however, mean Union Pacific will continue working to improve its HealthTrack wellness program for long-term success” (U.S. Chamber of Commerce, 2005: www.prevent.org).

6.2 The Dow Chemical Company: Good Health for the Whole Self

- **Program overview**

- Number of Employees: 43,000.

- **Program goals**

- Improve the Health status of Dow people.
- Positively impact the health-related costs of Dow people.
- Be perceived as a valued service by Dow people.

- **Program components**

- Group programs.
- One-to-one counselling.
- Web-based information.
- Immunization.
- Home-based and self-managed kit programs.
- Relevant workplace health policy.
- Preventive health coverage in our benefit plan.

- **Key findings**

- 42 percent of North American employees who are members of their fitness centres are regular users.
- 35 percent of North American employees at a site with a fitness centre are members of the fitness centre.
- About 43 percent of North American employees participate in health promotion activities other than in fitness centres.

- Participants in Dow's *Positive Action* self-care and health care consumerism program had statistically significant fewer claims for self-limited illnesses and emergency room visits than those who did not participate.
- 83 percent of North American employees voluntarily participate in their scheduled health surveillance and screening examination.

- **Message from the CEO**

Andrew N. Liveris, President and CEO say:

"I believe that we need a sustained focus on prevention to maintain and improve the health of our people. Prevention has the power to make a real and lasting difference in our individual quality of life. "At Dow, our analysis shows that prevention can improve both our direct and indirect health related costs. Our profit potential is inextricably linked to the capability and performance of our employees. "Our actions demonstrate Dow's strong commitment to prevention and to the health of our employees and retirees, their families, and ultimately, the community. Our efforts include preventive-focused company policies, a comprehensive health promotion program, a health care benefit plan which supports preventive care, and collaborations with external partners. "We have recently strengthened our commitment to this effort by adopting a Dow health strategy with prevention as a major pillar in the overall plan" (U.S. Chamber of Commerce, 2005: www.prevent.org).

6.3 Johnson & Johnson: *Live for life*

- **Program overview**

- Number of employees: Approximately 109,900 men and women in 57 countries.

- **Program goals**

- Have the healthiest and safest workforce in the most environmentally responsible corporation in the world.
- Integrate and coordinate services (Disability Management, Employee Assistance, Occupational Health, Wellness & Fitness, Work Life, Safety & Benefits) to improve health and productivity and control health care costs.
- Fulfil our Credo responsibility and help employees adapt to rapidly changing business environments.

- **Program components**

- Online health profile (health risk assessment).
- Lifestyle/disease management counselling.
- Health risk intervention programs.
- Environmental/cultural support.
- Financial incentives for participation.
- Integration of health promotion strategy with health care benefit plan design.

- **Key findings**

- Savings of about \$9-10 million per year from reduced medical utilization and lower administrative expenses.

- Health profile results for 44,000 employees (September 2001 to December 2004) indicate that Healthy People goals are surpassed in three of the four target areas.
- Smoking/tobacco use 6 percent—the target 9 percent.
- High blood pressure 9 percent—the target 10 percent.
- High cholesterol 9 percent—the target 15 percent.
- Physical activity 38 percent (of the population is inactive)—the target 20 percent

- **Message from the CEO**

William C. Weldon, Chairman, Board of Directors, and CEO say:

“An important part of our Credo responsibility to our employees is providing them with resources to lead healthier lives. Good health is important to all of us. Good health is also good business. “For more than 20 years, Johnson & Johnson has helped employees recognize and change behaviours that threaten their health. Our next generation health and wellness program strategy is the Healthy People program that sets numerical targets to measure our success in helping our employees improve and maintain their health. Our current targets focus on tobacco use, cholesterol and blood pressure reduction, and increasing physical activity. The Health Profile results will provide baseline data for each operating company and will be used to measure our progress against these targets. Healthy People is all about our employees—our greatest asset. Their actions can improve their own health and serve as an example to their colleagues. Their efforts will result in the success of this program and its ability to achieve long-term health improvements and to create a motivated and productive workforce” (U.S. Chamber of Commerce, 2005: www.prevent.org).

6.4 Eskom Holdings (Pty) Ltd.

Eskom is regarded as one of the leading organizations in South Africa in the field of health and wellness, and their efforts to improve the quality of life of many people in South Africa has earned them a Markinor Top Brand Award (Teixeira, 2002:www.bizcommunity.com). The studies of Lubbe (2002:16-17) and Grace (2001:iv-v) on the impact of worksite wellness programs on workers in physical demanding occupations in Eskom will be briefly discussed.

THE EFFECT OF A WORKSITE WELLNESS PROGRAM ON THE PHYSICAL WORK CAPACITY OF WORKERS (Lubbe, 2002:16-17)

- **Program overview**

- 36 workers performing physical demanding tasks
- 9 Worksite Wellness Centres distributed nationally according to the operations of the company
- Participants were at the Wellness Centres full time for two weeks
- Specialised multidisciplinary teams attended to the wellness of each participant

- **Program goals**

- Empower participants to adopt a wellness lifestyle
- Early return to work after injury
- Meet the task related minimum physical ability requirements of their job

- **Program components**

- Physical work capacity assessments
- Wellness lifestyle training
- Lifestyle/disease management counselling.

- Work hardening training
- Management and peer support.
- Monthly follow-ups

- **Key findings**

- Productivity improvement – 13.9%
- Estimated return-on-investment – R1.00:R10.80
- Physical work capacity improvement – 12%
- Attitude towards change improvement – 12.2%

6.5 The impact of a worksite physical wellness program on sick leave, absenteeism and health-related fitness (Grace, 2001:iv-v)

- **Program overview**

- 68 black African males performing physical demanding tasks
- Randomly assigned to a control and experimental group
- Experimental group participated in a 6-month physical wellness program

- **Program goals**

- Empower participants to adopt a wellness lifestyle
- Early return to work after injury
- Meet the task related minimum physical ability requirements of their job

- **Program components**

- Wellness lifestyle training

- Home exercise program
- Clinical and physical evaluation
- Sick leave and absenteeism data collection

- **Key findings**
 - Statistical significant changes in most parameters
 - Reduced lost workdays due to sick leave and absenteeism
 - Improved systolic blood pressure
 - Improved hamstring and lower back flexibility

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