Worksite Wellness: A Viable Option

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As chair of the *Regional Issues* sub-committee on health care, I had an opportunity to join the Chamber of Commerce of Fargo Moorhead's Public Affairs Coordinator at a one day seminar titled "Growing a Healthy Organization through Employee Wellness," organized by the Minnesota Chamber of Commerce.

To address the rise of health care premium costs, many employers are looking to options such as cost sharing, cost shifting, and managed care plans. The problem with these methods is they merely shift the burden of payment, with no impact on total cost.

After sitting through the seminar, I am convinced a worksite wellness program that is well planned and strategically implemented can be a key long-term answer for keeping employees well, and have a dramatic effect of the total cost of health care for the employer and employee.

Since the seminar, I have spent some time further researching the ideas that were presented. The following points, cited in numerous studies, should certainly give any company, regardless of size, a reason to consider implementing a worksite wellness program.

- Lower health care costs
- Reduced absenteeism
- Higher productivity
- Reduced utilization of health care benefits
- Reduced use of worker's compensation and disability benefits
- Increased employee morale and loyalty to company

This issue will be addressed at a future meeting of the *Regional Issues* committee. If you are interested in learning more or becoming involved in the committee contact Kelli Poehls at 218.359.0511.

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