

Wellness programmes can improve productivity

Wellness and disease lifestyle management programmes, if implemented correctly, have the ability to make a significant difference in the lives of employees and the overall productivity of a company. This is according to Professor Jacques Snyman, director of Product Development at Zurreal.



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Snyman says effective wellness programmes that take into account physical, emotional, financial and overall well-being factors can provide valuable insights for employers to manage the needs of their workforce.

"Analysing leave and sick note data enables employers to manage - and ultimately eliminate - the potential impact of human capital risks on their bottom line. For example, employees who take protracted sick leave could be suffering from an underlying physical or mental illness that is not being treated correctly. If left unaddressed, this sporadic absenteeism is likely to continue, as will its impact on the organisation's bottom line.

Increased productivity

"Ensuring access to timely treatment and care will ensure concordance with the care path prescribed by clinicians, positively impacting the individual's health outcomes to the ultimate benefit of the employer in the form of increased productivity and decreases absenteeism," says Snyman.

Providing an employee well-being programme also doesn't have to cut into the bottom line. "For example, small enterprises may come to an arrangement with a local pharmacy clinic or clinic sister to visit their employees for regular health checks instead of employing a full time occupational health nurse as is typically seen at larger organisations."

He notes that centralising the data collected at these clinics under a well-structured wellness programme and policy will also enable the employer and employee to timeously address warning signals and intervene by providing access to professional assistance when necessary.

Addressing the root cause

For employees, a properly constructed wellness programme can prevent a clinical event, such as a heart attack, from happening by addressing the root cause earlier. "Effective wellness programmes can help to avoid certain diseases from happening, or else make the disease more bearable and treatable from a lifestyle management perspective.

"Once someone has developed a chronic disease, the cost to treat it and the risks to the person's health become significantly higher. It is not possible to simply treat that disease event; it becomes a long-term relationship that involves a total treatment package, including a doctor, dietician and a number of other healthcare professionals," Syman says.

While such programmes can have a significant impact for companies and employees, few make enough of them.

"Companies need to encourage and educate their workforce about the importance of participating in these initiatives; but the programme must be targeted in terms of what diseases or behaviours are most prevalent among their own staff.

"Different solutions may be required depending on the type of industry, the size of the company and the staff complement; but a holistic, integrated approach can prevent diseases from developing in the first place and mitigate the risk of a non-productive or absent workforce," concludes Snyman.

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