



Press Release

Workplace Health Programs Are Key to Improving American Life Expectancy and Health

Research study recommends five steps for businesses and Americans to benefit from workplace disease prevention programs

New York – As Americans face growing health and financial burdens from preventable, non-communicable diseases such as cardiovascular disease, diabetes and certain cancers, a new study demonstrates employers have a unique opportunity to improve Americans’ health. The research is led by Dr. Katherine Tryon and Dr. Derek Yach from [the Vitality Institute](#) and is published in the November issue of the *Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine*.

The study, which involved a first-of-its-kind comprehensive review of existing research into workplace health programs, notes that even though the United States spends more on health care than any other country, the life expectancy and disease-specific survival rates of Americans has not improved at a rate similar to other developed countries. It traces the problem to the fragmented spending on public health and disease prevention programs in United States, and finds the workplace is a common central setting where evidence-based disease prevention and health promotion programs could be easily implemented. These programs could positively influence the health of 155 million working-age Americans while financially benefiting their employers by reducing healthcare costs, reducing sick time and improving productivity.

The study’s authors recommend business and governmental leaders take the following five steps to encourage the adoption of evidence-based disease prevention and health promotion programs in the workplace:

1. Increase the level of training in health promotion and disease prevention and the level of advocacy by leaders both inside and outside of the workplace
2. Provide government incentives for employers to invest in workplace health programs
3. Increase the quality and quantity of research into the benefits of workplace health programs
4. Adjust government regulations to promote the use of evidence-based disease prevention programs
5. Link workplace and community-based programs in order to multiply the effect of each program

“Encouraging employers to invest in programs that help their employees live longer, healthier lives is not only good for society, it is also good for a company's bottom line,” said Dr. Tyron. “I hope this research

will encourage corporate and governmental leaders to take action and implement evidence-based workplace health programs.”

For more information, you can read a [blog](#) by its main author, see a [video](#) of the main author explaining why this is an important issue, or access the [article](#) itself.

About the Vitality Institute

The Vitality Institute is an evidence-driven, action-oriented research organization working to strengthen the evidence base around what works and what doesn't work in health promotion and chronic disease prevention. Its mission is to advance knowledge about the evolving science and art of prevention and health promotion in order to build healthier societies and reduce incidence of non-communicable diseases. The Vitality Institute is an initiative of Discovery, a global financial services provider, and is part of Discovery's commitment to health promotion and well-being programs. More information is available at www.thevitalityinstitute.org.

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What Experts Have to Say About This Article

“Making the Workplace a More Effective Site for Prevention of Major Chronic Diseases in Adults by Kathleen Tryon, et al. gets straight to the core of why many workplace health promotion programs have yet to demonstrate results of lasting value. It then puts forth a much needed blueprint for shifting the ROI of these programs away from typically short-sighted financial models and better aligns them with ones that support long-term investment in corporate sustainability and corporate social responsibility. It's a provocative and significant call to action that will accrue lasting benefits for businesses, the public sector, and for the individual alike.”

— Ilene J. Klein, MD, FAAFP Director Global Employee Health Services Qualcomm Incorporated

“This article gives the big picture on why prevention is key to a healthy workforce, a healthy bottom line for business, and a healthier future for our nation now and for generations to come.”

– Jim Marks, MD, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Senior Vice President

“I couldn't agree more. Disease prevention has long been over looked in this country particularly amongst working age adults. In addition to investing in the prevention of non-communicable disease, attention should be placed on keeping adults well through appropriate ACIP recommended vaccinations. The CDC reported again this year that vaccination coverage levels among adults for many routinely recommended vaccinations are unacceptably low and that substantial improvement in adult vaccination is needed to reduce the health consequences of vaccine-preventable diseases among adults. The work place provides an opportune place to educate and provide these missed services to working age adults.”

— Virginia Peddicord, Corporate Employer Accounts, Merck & Co., Inc.

“I applaud the efforts represented in the recent publication – Making the Workplace a More Effective Site for Prevention of Non-Communicable Diseases in Adults. Since the average adult spends the majority of his or her waking hours at work it is an ideal venue for the promotion of health and well-being. The evidence strongly supports that this is not only the right thing to do but it is also good business. A healthy workforce provides a competitive advantage.”

— Raymond Fabius MD, DFACPE, Founder and President, HealthNEXT

“Improving the health of all Americans, and potentially reducing the burden of preventable yet costly chronic diseases, will have to include the workplace as an opportunity to effect measureable, meaningful, positive health change. The potential cannot be ignored. This paper makes the case.”

— Eduardo Sanchez, MD MPH FAAFP, Deputy Chief Medical Officer, American Heart Association

“This article hits a home run as it addresses the root cause for our health care crisis, but also provides a way for the future. Health and well-being is the new frontier to address sustainability. Well-being is increasingly being seen as an area that businesses need to take more seriously to better sustain their own healthcare systems. The Corporate value system needs such a holistic approach to creating a sustainable business– prioritizing people, the planet and profit – so the value we place on our employees is integral to a healthy future.”

— Fik Isaac, MD, MPH, FACOEM, Vice President, Global Health Services, Johnson & Johnson and Chief Medical Officer, Health & Wellness Solutions