Implementing a Worksite Health Promotion Program for CAPCO Employees, in

Cortland, New York

State University of New York at Cortland
Introduction

In today’s society chronic disease is the leading cause of death in Americans (Sorensen et al., 2011). Chronic diseases such as heart disease, stroke, cancer, diabetes, and respiratory diseases are also responsible for an annual health care cost of 2.5 trillion dollars in the United States (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC], 2013). The American lifestyle of an inadequate diet, low levels of physical activity, and high rates of alcohol and tobacco use are large contributors to high rates of chronic disease (Mattke et al., 2013). The decreased amount of physical activity that is seen in adults has led to roughly 67% of adults being above the weight recommendations, as well as contributing to two to eight percent of the health care expenditures in the U. S. (Gates & Brehm, 2010; Sorensen et al., 2011).

The increase in chronic disease rates has coincided with a lower age in which people experience these diseases, affecting the working population (Mattke et al., 2013). Living with chronic diseases and overall poor health affects employers as well as the employees when considering lower employee productivity, disability, absenteeism rates, and a monetary cost of one-third of the 2.5 trillion dollars spent on health care annually (CDC, 2013; Sorenson et al., 2011). Chronic diseases are largely preventable due to being caused by modifiable risk factors (National Association of Chronic Disease Directors [NACDD], n.d.). To prevent chronic diseases, address the high cost of healthcare, and, indirect costs such as absenteeism, half of all employers in the United States offer worksite health promotion programs (Mattke et al., 2013). These programs vary with the size of the organization but all share a goal to improve employee health and decrease business costs (Mattke et al., 2013).

Due to the considerable amount of time employees spend at work, places of employment have the ability to promote health by reaching the vast employed population (Sorensen et al., 2011). Despite
the fact that half of all employers offer a health promotion program, the goal of the Nation’s health agenda, *Healthy People 2020*, is to increase the number of employers that offer worksite health promotion programs, as well as to increase the number of employees who participate in these programs (Mattke et al., 2013; Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, 2014). The New York State Prevention Agenda 2013-2017 is a health improvement guide that focuses on priority areas within the state of New York and at the county level, and also offers specific goals to decrease chronic diseases and conditions (New York State Department of Health [NYSDOH], 2013).

According to NYSDOH (2013), 25.4 percent of New Yorkers are obese and the goal is to reduce this by 2.2 percent in the next two years. Smokers account for 16.6 % of the population with a goal to reduce this to 15 %. Additionally, 58 % of individuals in New York State with hypertension have control of their blood pressure, however the goal is to increase this to 69.3 %. Similarly, 58.5 % of New Yorkers with diabetes under commercial managed care have their blood glucose in control, which is two percent below the desired goal (NYSDOH, 2013). These are important statistics regarding chronic disease in New York State, because this data shows various contributors to chronic disease, how prevalent they are, and how difficult these diseases can be to manage (NYSDOH, 2009).

Chronic diseases are a priority in New York State, due heavily to the top four leading causes of death in New York State falling into this category. Heart disease, cancer, chronic lower respiratory diseases, and stroke accounted for over half of all deaths in 2012 (New York Department of Health-Bureau of Biometrics and Health Statistics, 2014). These diseases are a priority within New York State; however they are also a priority within specific industries, with the Healthcare and Social Assistance sector being the primary focus of this proposal (Lee et al., 2012).
The Cortland County Community Action Program (CAPCO) is an agency that serves the county of Cortland and prides itself on encouraging those within the county to be self-reliant (CAPCO, 2013). The main agency houses a variety of programs including Energy Services, Head Start, WIC, Consumer Directed Personal Assistant Program, and Family Development Program (CAPCO, 2013). The agency has a main office on North Main Street in Cortland, New York; however the roughly 215 employees are not all housed at the main office (CAPCO, 2013). CAPCO is a part of the Healthcare and Social Assistance sector; based on data from the National Health Interview Survey, employees in this sector consistently ranked high in a variety of unhealthy categories (Lee et al., 2012). These workers experienced the largest decline in health status in 12 months when compared to other sectors (Lee et al., 2012). These workers were also found to have the highest number of bedridden days, physical limitations, and highest prevalence of cancer when compared to other sectors. The same held true for visual impairments, heart disease and asthma diagnoses. This line of work also held the second highest rates of diabetes, and obesity, and the third highest rates of hypertension when compared to employees of other sectors (Lee et al., 2012).

The services that the employees at CAPCO provide are beneficial to many individuals and families in Cortland. The agency’s work itself does not pertain to chronic disease; however for the employees to better serve their clients, to be proactive against chronic disease, to create an environment of health and wellness, and to reduce health care coverage costs the CAPCO wellness committee, wishes to create a worksite health promotion program.

**Purpose**
The purpose of this intervention was to develop a comprehensive worksite health promotion program for the approximately 215 CAPCO employees (G.Richards, personal communication, September 16, 2015).

Describe the project

Various aspects of a comprehensive worksite health promotion program have been implemented by the wellness committee, with support from the Executive Director. The goal of the ongoing program is to educate CAPCO employees on a variety of health issues; and to create a workplace that supports healthy living. To create the most successful program for the employees of CAPCO, qualitative and quantitative data was collected to aid in identifying employee interests and needs.

The expected outcomes of the project are to increase knowledge and awareness about a variety of health and wellness topics, as well as to support individuals in living a healthy lifestyle. The benefits experienced by the implementation of a worksite health promotion program include a healthier, less stressed staff that will gain knowledge about their own personal health, as well as a potential savings in health insurance premiums related to a decrease in health insurance claims due to employee illness. The process of creating a worksite health promotion program from initial data collection, to implementation, provided me with the knowledge and experience of primary data collection, understanding the best way to organize and use data, creating a program that fits the needs of the target population, as well as experience gained from working with a committee. Not only did I gain hands-on experience, but I also had a chance to be creative, and gained valuable time management skills to balance the research of the program, and the other responsibilities at WIC.
It has been shown that comprehensive wellness programs have been most successful when the following components are included, “educational programming, individualized instruction and assistance in lifestyle management, and a health and wellness-minded built environment (Cahalin et al., 2015, p. 96). A comprehensive worksite wellness program has yet to be fully implemented, as the wellness committee felt it was best to introduce wellness activities and opportunities as smaller programs. Regarding educational programming, monthly newsletters were created to bring about knowledge and awareness of health related topics. The information provided was based on the health topics that were rated highest among employees per the survey data. A cookbook with healthy cooking tips and healthy recipes was also created due to considerable interest in healthy cooking as indicated in the survey results.

Furthermore, a fitness challenge was implemented to address an overwhelming interest in physical activity and weight loss program. This challenge began in the month of November and will end January 1st. The challenge required individuals to form teams of three and to track their exercise in a booklet that was provided by the wellness committee. To encourage participation two local gyms and a dance studio offered discounted rates to CAPCO employees. Employees earned two points for every 20 minutes of individual exercise, and six points for attending fitness classes, with the opportunity to earn an additional two bonus points each week 18 points was earned. The team with the highest mid-challenge points, and points at the end of the challenge, will earn a prize valued at $25, and $100 per team mate, respectively. A celebration for those who participated is also planned for early January, when a post-challenge survey will be conducted for evaluation purposes. Although the fitness challenge was created by the wellness committee, and is not an evidence-based program, the fitness challenge resembles a successful program that was implemented at a small California university (Leininger, Orozco, & Adams, 2014). In this competition based program, employees were in teams of five, used
pedometers to monitor their steps, and the team with the highest amount of steps after four weeks were given awards and prizes (Leininger et al., 2014). Through the use of a post survey this program was shown to decrease stress and increase physical activity in participants (Leininger et al., 2014).

Lastly, to create an environment that is conducive to healthy living, the wellness committee was created to establish a group of co-workers who understand the importance of a healthy workplace and are committed to changing the workplace culture at CAPCO. The wellness committee has been successful in gaining support from upper management, and serves as a liaison between employees and management regarding health and wellness issues. In the future, the wellness committee will continue to create wellness programs based on the survey interest and need data that was collected.

Methods

Data collection

To help identify employee need and interest levels, a survey consisting of 17 questions was distributed on September 23rd via employee email, which were sent back via email or printed out and dropped at the office. Several copies were also printed in various CAPCO locations to encourage employees to participate. The data was used to assess the employee’s preferences regarding communication avenues for health information, times, and days in which they are available, and the topics they are most interested in. The data collected also provided basic information regarding the health of the employees, such as if they are a smoker, overweight, and physically inactive, as well as open-ended questions to encourage the employees to include other aspects of a wellness program that may not have been specifically listed (see Appendix). This information helped in the design and implementation of the wellness program. The data collection period went through the end of October.

Results and analysis
The quantitative data was organized in charts and analyzed using frequencies. The qualitative data was organized in a summary and analyzed through general themes.
5. How interested are you in the following topics, with 5 most interested and 1 least interested?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Allergies</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asthma</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Back injury prevention</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asthma</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cholesterol mngt.</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diabetes</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmental</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial mngt.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Healthy cooking</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental health</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nutrition</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parenting</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical activity</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smoking Cessation</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stress Mngt.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walking program</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weight Mngt.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women's health</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work/life balance</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. 1
2. 2
3. 3
4. 4
5. 5
6. Interest in screenings at work

- Blood...
- Flu Shots
- Body fat
- Cholesterol
- Seated...
- Hearing
- Glucose
- Bone Density
- Vision
- Skin Analyzer
- None
- Did not...

Gender

- Male
- Female

Age

- 18-30
- 31-40
- 41-50
- 51+
- Did not answer

Health Status

- Excellent
- Very good
- Good
- Fair
- Poor

Sleep

- 5 or less
- 6
- 7
- 8
- 9 or more
Based on the survey results, the majority of survey participants would participate in a wellness program, had a preference for programs that are onsite or online, and occur after work on Wednesdays for 30 minutes. The majority of employees were interested in information on healthy cooking, weight management, women’s health, a walking program, stress management, and work/life balance; with diabetes, men’s health, and smoking cessation being the topics with the lowest interest.
employees expressed interest in onsite screenings including, seated massage, blood pressure and flu shots.

Demographically, the majority of those who responded were women with a majority age between 41-50 years old. Most respondents rated their health as “good”, with CAPCO employees receiving an average of seven hours of sleep, most are active but without exercise, and the majority only missed one to two days of work last year. The majority of this population does not smoke, but is concerned most with exercise and weight loss which corresponds with the concerns of their health care providers; many of the employees indicated a readiness to change in these areas as well.

The qualitative data related to questions regarding what the employees believed was most important in a worksite health program and any other suggestions, concerns or comments they had regarding the program. The majority of these responses related to physical activity and exercise. Employees would like to incorporate physical activity into their work day without losing personal time, expressed concern over excessive sitting, would like incentives, and a sizeable discount for local gym memberships. Furthermore, those who responded would like onsite presentations and information on finances, stress management, healthy meals, and mental health. Involvement from program directors concerning overall wellness and safety of employees was also mentioned, as well as developing programs that all employees can attend, since those in head start and WIC have strict schedules. Lastly, respondents expressed gratitude for implementing a wellness program for the CAPCO employees.

Discussion

Although evaluations have not been completed, the general feedback regarding the health newsletters and the fitness challenge have been positive. Suggestions have been made by employees regarding topics to include in the monthly newsletters, which have been well received. The fitness
The wellness committee has a great foundation and it comprised of individuals who truly are invested in the health and well-being of CAPCO employees. Based on the results from the survey and the initial response to the programs implemented, future wellness programs would be most successful if topics of interest are incorporated, they are adaptable to a change in interest, and are assessed for evaluation with a pre-survey and post-survey to gain insight into the effectiveness of the programs. The wellness committee
would benefit from creating a mission statement, goals, and objectives so the purpose of the wellness committee is well established and maintained. To further the goals of supporting a healthy lifestyle for all CAPCO employees, the wellness committee could look for solutions to provide employees time to incorporate physical activity into their work day. Lastly, the removal of the vending machine at the main office or the addition of healthier options, coupled with a recommendation to provide healthier meal options at meetings would further create a supportive health environment.

This project was overwhelming at first, however in the end I gained a lot of experience in many areas. I realized quickly I could only do one step of the project at a time, and that was less daunting than attempting to look at the entire project as a whole. What I valued most about this project was working with the wellness committee. I did not know what to expect from this group of individuals, but the members of the wellness committee were not only so welcoming to me and my ideas, but they set aside time in their busy work schedules to create a better environment for their co-workers. This was a great group of people to work with. The most rewarding aspect of this project was the response to the fitness challenge. The challenge created a friendly competitive environment to the office with participants discussing what fitness classes they attended and how their team was going to win; It was great to see the employees taking it seriously, but not too seriously! Also, one employee would always tell me how much she walked everyday and how she was losing weight, that was rewarding as well. The most challenging part of this project was trying to find an evidence-based program that was compatible with both the needs and interests of the employees, and any programming plans the wellness committee had in mind. I am also very thankful to the entire staff at CAPCO for providing me with an opportunity to further my education through this experience.
References


National Association of Chronic Disease Directors (NACDD). (n.d.). Why we need public health to improve healthcare. Retrieved from:
http://www.chronicdisease.org/?page=WhyWeNeedPH2impHC


Appendix

Dear Employee:

As part of our commitment to helping our employees be the best they can be, your health is important to us. We are interested in knowing what wellness programs you would like us to consider offering in the future. To help you achieve your specific health and wellness goals, we need your input!

Please complete the attached Employee Wellness Interest Survey. Your participation is completely voluntary and should only take a few minutes. Your survey answers will help us develop future programming that’s more in line with your specific health interests and needs. Thank you, in advance, for taking the time to provide your valuable feedback.

Please return this form to Shannon at the Main office or Shannone@capco.org within one week of receiving it.

1. Would you participate in a wellness program if offered to you at work?
   - [ ] Yes
   - [ ] No

2. How do you like to learn about health and lifestyle information? (Please select all answers that apply.)
   - [ ] One-on-one counseling
   - [ ] Phone counseling
   - [ ] Health Screenings (i.e. Blood Pressure)
   - [ ] Health fairs
   - [ ] On-site workshops
   - [ ] Online programs
   - [ ] Group Support
   - [ ] Videos
   - [ ] Audio cassette tapes
   - [ ] DVD
   - [ ] Books/Materials
   - [ ] Self-directed programs
   - [ ] Physician
   - [ ] CD

3. What time of day would you be most likely to participate in a wellness program? (Please select all answers that apply.)
   - [ ] Monday
   - [ ] Tuesday
   - [ ] Wednesday
   - [ ] Thursday
   - [ ] Friday
   - [ ] Weekend Shift
   - [ ] Morning
   - [ ] Lunchtime
   - [ ] Afternoon
   - [ ] A.M. (before work)
   - [ ] P.M. (after work)
   - [ ] Any day or time
4. How long should a wellness activity last?
   - 30 minutes
   - 45 minutes
   - 60 minutes
   - 90 minutes

5. Using the scale below, please rate how interested you are in each wellness topic. The more specific information we receive from you, the more tailored our wellness program can be to your needs and wants. This question is voluntary.

Please circle your interest level for the wellness topics listed below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Wellness Topic</th>
<th>Not Interested</th>
<th>Very Interested</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Allergies</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asthma</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Back Injury Prevention</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cholesterol Management</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diabetes</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional Health</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Healthy Cooking</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men’s Health</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nutrition</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parenting</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Activity</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skin Cancer</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smoking Cessation</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stress Management</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walking Program</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weight Management</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6. Please indicate which screening test(s) you would participate in if offered at your worksite (your screening results will be confidential).

- Blood Pressure
- Flu Shots
- Body Fat
- Cholesterol
- Seated Massage
- Hearing
- Glucose
- Bone Density
- Vision
- Skin Analyzer
- None. I am not interested in screenings at this time

7. Background Information. These questions are voluntary (this information would be helpful to better tailor wellness program offerings).

**Gender:**

- Male
- Female

**Age**

- 18 – 30
- 31 – 40
- 41 – 50
- 51 +

8. How would you describe your overall health

- Excellent
- Very good
- Good
- Fair
- Poor
9. On average, how many hours of sleep do you get each night?
   ✓ 5 or less
   ✓ 6
   ✓ 7
   ✓ 8
   ✓ 9 or more

10. Current exercise routine or level of activity:
    ✓ Regular exercise for at least 30 minutes at least 3 times a week
    ✓ Regular exercise less than 3 times a week or for less than 30 minutes
    ✓ Active lifestyle (e.g., walking, gardening, cleaning) but no regular exercise
    ✓ Inactive lifestyle (e.g., sedentary job and leisure activities) and no exercise

11. In the past year, how many days of work have you missed due to personal illness:
    ✓ 0
    ✓ 1-2
    ✓ 3-5
    ✓ 6-10
    ✓ 11-15
    ✓ 16+
    ✓ Does not apply

12. How often do you feel tense, anxious, or depressed?
    ✓ Often
    ✓ Sometimes
    ✓ Rarely
    ✓ Never

13. I am a:
    ✓ Regular smoker
    ✓ Very occasional smoker
    ✓ Non-smoker

14. A health professional has expressed concern to me about:
    ✓ My weight
    ✓ My diet or nutrition
    ✓ My blood pressure
    ✓ My risk of heart attack
    ✓ My stress levels
15. Check the box that most closely matches your feelings about the following health or wellness category:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Health topic</th>
<th>Ready to make a change for the better</th>
<th>Not sure if I can or should make a change for the better. Need more information</th>
<th>Satisfied with my health in this area</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Exercise</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weight loss</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eating habits</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stress levels</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Smoking</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heart health or blood pressure</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If a health or wellness topic that you are interested in or concerned about is not listed here, please write it below. Then check whether you would like to receive information on this topic and whether you would participate in a company activity or program on this topic.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Health or Wellness Topic</th>
<th>Would like information</th>
<th>Would participate in company activity or program</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

16. We want our committee to best suit your needs. We can try to include a variety of wellness topics into the program including but not limited to emotional, physical, and financial well being. Briefly describe what you would like most from a worksite wellness program:

17. Please use the space below to write any other ideas, suggestions, or concerns you have about health, wellness, for our plans for an worksite wellness program.