

Dynamic Chiropractic®



YOUR PRACTICE / BUSINESS

## **Health Trending: Corporate Wellness for the Sports Rehab DC**

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I see definite trends in the work landscape for chiropractors, in part due to federal changes, worker's compensation cost issues, and John Q. Public's attitude. The government continues talking about health care (costs) and balance (as in budgets and efficiency), while corporations are talking about efficiency, profits and lifestyle. How does this translate to practitioners like us? Many companies are recommitting to wellness and well-being programs, in part due to the anticipated cost savings.



### A Chance to Educate and Share Your Message

The message from the top is clear: A healthy work force is a productive work force. We see this with professional sports teams; owners and coaches are doing everything they can to minimize player injuries and make athletes more durable. This is an opportunity - and our responsibility - to educate consumers (patients) about proper nutrition, stress management, environmental exposures and physical activity (fitness).

I know companies that have built in-house fitness centers, offer free gym memberships and on-site yoga classes, promote healthy "lunch and learn" meetings, and even provide employee massage. These days, childcare and a certain amount of paid time to volunteer at a charity are not unusual benefits. Most of the young adults (20- and 30-something) I know are working crazy-long hours; but at the same time, I hear bosses tell me they are concerned if employees work *too many* hours in a week.

### Help Employees Deal With Their Stress

I recently gave a talk at a local university on "Healthy Choices & Stress Reduction." I was invited back to provide additional health talks about "Quick & Easy Desk Exercises." The concept is simple: Offer your services as extra benefits to promote wellness. Right now, about a quarter of U.S. corporations offer some sort of stress-reduction program. On-site classes like meditation and yoga, along with professional services that provide massage and acupuncture, are "in." Stress and how to deal with it is a bigger topic than ever!

Stress is still costing U.S. businesses an estimated \$300 billion every year. Health care costs for employees with high stress levels are 46 percent higher than for lower-stressed colleagues. I know DCs who have contracts to provide on-site chiropractic care and other benefits like yoga classes and chair massage to large numbers of employees. The guys I know get paid well to provide these benefits. It is no wonder; the word is out that health care costs decrease and productivity goes up when these simple programs are implemented.

More than half of employees say work stress has made them look for a new job, leave a job or say no to a promotion. The invitation is there for chiropractors to become part of the team that helps people want to stay on the job!

According to a Harvard Medical School study, [96 percent](#) of senior leaders report feeling burned out, with a third saying the burnout is extreme. Recommendations for addressing burnout include chiropractic care and therapeutic lifestyle changes such as a whole-food / no-processed-food diet, nutritional supplements, hormone optimization, sleep hygiene, and consistent exercise. Drinking more water (less soda, less coffee, less alcohol), increasing oxygen (get some daily exercise), getting some sunlight (either direct or vitamin D3) and getting to bed earlier makes a big difference. Your recommendations in this regard can have a positive effect.

I may not always figure out the exact cause of a patient's complaints, but I try to motivate them to move more and eat a little better without any harm done. Chiropractors should write prescriptions for exercise like an MD writes for drugs.

More than 20 years ago, I created a company with a model to go out to large corporations and teach employees how to perform pre-workday "stretch and flex" programs. These programs were designed to reduce worker's compensation injuries and thus reduce costs. Pre-workday flex / stretch programs worked, they were fun, and served as a key part of a positive message to employees.

Then the economy changed and companies stopped spending on these types of programs. Now the "employee wellness" trend is coming back, and injury prevention and risk management programs are in. Companies will create a greater culture of injury prevention and wellness so vibrant physicality is an admired thing.

### Market Yourself as More Than a Spine Specialist

I frequently get asked to help companies reduce worker's compensation risks, or give a talk about stress or nutrition. I know how to screen employees for risk of injuries, and I know how to write an exercise program that will lower costs and reduce injuries. I urge you to become a part of this growing field as well.

Going out to a business and just offering a static spinal screening is old school! Be comfortable offering companies on-site functional movement screens (risk management), chair massages, group

exercise classes, ergonomic classes, nutritional counseling, [weight-loss](#) education and body composition screenings. A company would rather have a nurse practitioner monitor blood pressure, or a personal trainer offer a stretch class, than let a chiropractor perform a spinal screening on their patients. I'm not saying don't approach companies as the spine specialist because we are, but I suggest using all the avenues available for risk management.

I am pleased to see large corporations spending money on offices filled with natural light, healthy breakfast and lunch cafes, meditation rooms, and adjustable-height desks and chairs. If you can help a company develop a reputation as a place that puts the well-being of its employees and partners in front of profits, employees will be more loyal, happier, and cost less in terms of worker's compensation expenses. It's the trend all across the country! So, what are you waiting for?