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Contact:

Elizabeth Stelzer 614.249.1025
stelzee@nationwide.com

Nationwide Better Health Contributes to Landmark Peer-Reviewed Studies Documenting the Effectiveness of Lifestyle Health Coaching

Results demonstrate participation in lifestyle health coaching programs can decrease multiple health risks in individuals

Columbus, Ohio — **Nationwide Better HealthSM**, a leading provider of health and productivity management solutions, recently participated in two studies that demonstrate the beneficial impact lifestyle health coaching has on individuals committed to making positive lifestyle changes to improve their overall health.

To test the hypothesis that the most effective interventions for worksite wellness programs are those that provide sustained, individualized, one-on-one risk factor education and counseling, an independent, third-party, randomized clinical trial¹ was conducted by researchers from Vanderbilt University.

A sample of employees from Vanderbilt University who had cardiovascular risk factors first took a health risk assessment (HRA) to gain an accurate picture of their health risks. Subsequently, to determine how the intensity of intervention affected cardiovascular risk, employees were randomly assigned to one of two intervention groups for the one-year study period. Employees in the control group received one feedback session with a nurse about their risk factors and also received information about and access to Vanderbilt's free worksite health promotion programs (considered a low-level intervention). Employees in the experimental group received individualized, dedicated lifestyle health coaching for cardiovascular risk reduction using Nationwide Better Health's program² (considered a high-level intervention).

The risk (or chance) of having a heart attack in the next 10 years was measured for each participant at the beginning and end of the study using the Framingham 10-year coronary heart disease risk score³. Following one year of intervention, the risk of having a heart attack increased by more than 4 percent for employees in the low-level intervention program. In contrast, the group randomized and enrolled into the Nationwide Better Health lifestyle health coaching program saw a nearly 23 percent decrease in their risk.

¹ Maron DJ et al. *Journal of Cardiovascular Nursing* 2008; 23: 513-518

² Formerly known as the INTERVENT lifestyle management and cardiovascular risk reduction program

³ Framingham 10-year coronary heart disease risk score is an estimate of the risk or chances of an individual having a heart attack in the next 10 years. Scores are based on multiple risk factors, including cholesterol and blood pressure levels.

“With the risk of a heart attack actually increasing slightly for the group who didn’t receive individualized coaching, this demonstrates that an evidence-based, comprehensive lifestyle management and risk reduction program is superior for reducing risk in this population, when compared to a low intensity intervention even in a work environment enriched with health promotion programs,” said Dr. David Maron, associate professor of medicine and emergency medicine, division of cardiovascular medicine, Vanderbilt University. “The nearly 27 percentage-point gap between the two groups is a statistically significant difference.”

“An important take-away from this research is that a lifestyle management program must be well designed and executed in an effective manner in order to optimize the health of employees and to produce high levels of impact and return,” said Dr. Neil Gordon, chief medical and science officer for Nationwide Better Health. “When partnering with a health management vendor, organizations should ask to review the documented effectiveness of the vendor’s programs in appropriately conducted clinical trials and carefully review the impact of the results and outcomes. Clearly, not all programs are equal in their effectiveness. In today’s economic environment, it becomes even more crucial for employers to take care in selecting a program that will produce tangible and measurable results for a positive return-on-investment.”

A second study⁴ authored by Dr. Neil Gordon et al., together with researchers from Emory University (Atlanta, Ga.) and William Beaumont Hospital (Royal Oak, Mich.), evaluated the clinical effectiveness of lifestyle health coaching in normalizing the blood pressures of 2,478 individuals with prehypertension, or slightly elevated blood pressure, without the use of medication.

Over a period of six months, individuals participated in a combination of exercise training, nutrition, weight management, stress management, and, if needed, smoking cessation interventions as part of the lifestyle health coaching program. Blood pressure values were measured before and after the study. Results showed that 38 percent of individuals normalized their blood pressure levels without taking blood pressure-lowering medications.

“Prehypertension affects almost 70 million adult Americans. It is associated with a decreased life expectancy, increased hospitalizations, and increased health care costs. Our study, which documents the benefits of lifestyle health coaching in individuals with prehypertension, has profound potential implications for corporate America regarding enhanced productivity and cost-containment,” continued Dr. Gordon. “Lifestyle health coaching can help individuals adhere to meaningful behavior changes that lead to cost savings for both the individual and their employer.”

About Nationwide Better Health

Nationwide Better HealthSM, a subsidiary of Nationwide[®], is a leading provider of health and productivity management solutions, aimed at improving the health and productivity of America’s workforce. Nationwide Better Health is the first company to truly integrate the best collection of health and productivity services available today, including health and wellness, and disease, disability, absence, medical and maternity management. The company’s offerings work together

⁴ Bavikati VV et al, *Effect of Comprehensive Therapeutic Lifestyle Changes on Prehypertension*, American Journal of Cardiology 2008; 102: 1677-1680

and independently to address both sides of the cost equation: increased efficiency of health and productivity programs and better employee health and well-being to reduce health care-related costs. For more information, call 866.404.6924 or visit: www.nwbetterhealth.com.

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