

NEWS RELEASE

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Organizations leveraging wellness best practices see slower medical cost growth rates

New HERO, Mercer Scorecard annual report reveals the role of leadership support, strategic planning, technology in driving successful employee wellness programs

New York and Edina, Minn. (March 10, 2015) — Do employee health management programs really work? A new report from [HERO](#) and [Mercer](#) that is based on data from the [HERO Employee Health Management Best Practices Scorecard in Collaboration with Mercer[®]](#), shares the results of six studies that were conducted over the past two years, providing evidence that workplace wellness programs can work — if they are well designed and well executed. More specifically, the studies noted in the report show companies with programs incorporating the most evidence-based best practices saw slower growth in medical costs over a three-year period than companies with programs using fewer best practices. Other studies in the report point to specific practices or strategies that support the effectiveness of wellness programs, such as having a formal strategic plan, company leaders who actively participate in programs, and a volunteer network of “wellness champions” to provide peer support for wellness initiatives.

Download the HERO report at:

http://hero-health.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/2014_Scorecard_Annual_report.pdf

“The HERO Scorecard provides valuable insight for individual companies on how their wellness efforts compare to other companies of their size and industry, while providing a unique view of what’s happening across a broad range of employer organizations,” said Jerry Noyce, president and CEO of HERO. “We’ve learned a great deal about wellness trends from Scorecard data over the years, and this report gives us a snapshot of what’s happening with employee wellness programs and what’s working.”

Studies in the report are based on analyses of employer data collected through the HERO Scorecard, which is the nation’s leading free, online tool that allows employers to evaluate their employee health management efforts and to benchmark their program and outcomes against companies of similar sizes and industries. In the process, HERO and Mercer have gained insight into employer wellness trends and health management best practices.

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Over 1,200 employers completed Version 3 of the Scorecard through 2013, and five of the studies rely on these data. The report also includes early findings from Version 4, which was released in June 2014, and has been completed by over 150 employers.

“Industry experts have long believed that health improvement is accomplished through strong leadership and workplace culture. And research such as the analyses featured in the Scorecard annual report, continue to reinforce this belief,” said Steven Noeldner, PhD, Mercer partner and chair of the HERO Research Study Subcommittee. “Data continues to show that the most effective wellness programs are those that combine strategies which encourage people to take the first step toward improving health, along with the cultural and leadership support to make those positive changes last.”

Other highlights from the current report, which includes data from both 2013 and 2014 analyses include:

- 36 percent of employers allow employees to take time away from work during the day for physical activity
- 28 percent of employers allow employees to take time during the workday to reduce stress
- 60 percent of employers make healthy food choices available in the workplace
- 57 percent of employers have implemented tobacco-free workplace policies
- 46 percent of employers use tracking devices and wearables, such as pedometers, glucometers and automated scales (used for transmit biometric data directly to a data repository for people with congestive heart failure, obesity and/or diabetes)
- 39 percent of employers enable employees to engage with the workplace wellness program via their smartphone or mobile device
- 44 percent of employers use some sort of social media or social challenge to increase engagement and participation

To learn more about the HERO Scorecard or to download the annual report, visit <http://hero-health.org/scorecard/>.

Note for editors

The HERO Employee Health Management Best Practices Scorecard in Collaboration with Mercer® is available to organizations on a complimentary basis and may be accessed through www.the-hero.org, www.mercer.com or a Scorecard Partner organization. The survey must be completed online, but a PDF version is available that can be used as a teaching tool or to prepare for completing the online version. After an organization’s information and data have been submitted to the online HERO Scorecard, they will receive a free report that compares the score of their program with the aggregate score of all respondents.

About HERO – Based in Edina, Minn., the Health Enhancement Research Organization (HERO) is a non-profit corporation dedicated to the creation and dissemination of employee health management research, education, policy, strategy, and leadership. HERO was established in 1996 as a not-for-profit, 501(c)3 corporation to create high quality employee health management (EHM) research, especially that dealing with the impact of modifiable health risks on health care costs. To learn more, visit www.the-hero.org. Follow us on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#) or [LinkedIn](#).

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