



A Wake Up Call for Corporate America: Editorial

This invited editorial in the September 2003 issue of the Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine provides a detailed over-view of employer reactions to routine double digit annual increases in health care costs based on numerous published employer surveys. Commentary explores why there is little hope for moderation in health care costs: the baby boomers, the graying of America, escalating hospital charges and the obesity epidemic. The editorial documents that 50% - 70% of all diseases and medical problems are caused by lifestyle choices such as: smoking, obesity, excess stress, lack of fitness, poor nutrition, lack of compliance in managing diabetes, hypertension, etc. The dichotomy of the health care cost crisis is that of the \$1.8 trillion annual budget, less than 6% is devoted to prevention of all kinds, including attempts to influence lifestyle choices.

The editorial concludes, "A Wake-Up Call for Corporate America is that an employee health care cost crisis is here. If the employer assumes the responsibility to pay for the diagnosis and treatment of employee/dependent illness, then serious consideration must be given to the reallocation of existing investment in human capital funds. This redirection of funding should be toward health enhancement programs and services that optimize employee/dependent health, which can reduce health care use, moderate cost increases, reduce illness absence and improve work performance".

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