

News Release

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HEALTH ENHANCEMENT RESEARCH ORGANIZATION (HERO) ANNOUNCES RECIPIENTS OF INDUSTRY LEADERSHIP AND RESEARCH AWARDS

Minneapolis (September 13, 2011)—The Health Enhancement Research Organization (HERO) announced today the recipients of two awards that recognize leadership and research excellence in the field of employee health management, often referred to workplace wellness.

“These awards recognize the important role that strong leadership and high-quality research play in improving the health of the nation’s workforce,” said Jerry Noyce, president and CEO of HERO. “Since Bill Whitmer and Mark Dundon founded HERO in 1996, the organization has provided industry leadership and research that have helped demonstrate how employee health management can improve health outcomes, control health care spending, and improve productivity.”

[Michael O’Donnell, Ph.D., MBA, MPH](#), was named the recipient of the **HERO Bill Whitmer Leadership Award** for his sustained leadership in enhancing the practice of employee health management and for fostering measurable improvements in behavior change and workplace health.

Dr. O’Donnell is founder, president and editor in chief of the *American Journal of Health Promotion*, the first scientific journal dedicated exclusively to health promotion. He was the founding chairman of Health Promotion Advocates, a non-profit group created to integrate health promotion into national policy. He previously served as director of health and wellness at the Cleveland Clinic and has helped more than 100 employers, foundations, health plans, health promotion providers, and governments enhance their health promotion efforts.

“It is an honor to receive an award named in honor of Bill Whitmer,” said O’Donnell. “Bill is one of the true visionaries in our field and one of the most effective organizers I have ever met. He taught me the importance of nurturing strong relationships in building an organization.”

[Ron Goetzel, Ph.D.](#), was named the recipient of the **HERO Mark Dundon Research Award**. This award recognizes an individual who has consistently worked to enhance and promote research that advances the science of employee health management. The recipient must be a published author of peer-reviewed articles, have served as principal investigator on original studies, and helped facilitate research by other health management professionals.

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Dr. Goetzel is currently research professor and director of the Emory University Institute for Health and Productivity Studies, and vice president of consulting and applied research at Thomson Reuters. Goetzel is responsible for leading innovative research projects focused on the relationship between health and well-being, medical costs, and work-related productivity. He is a nationally recognized and widely published expert in health and productivity management, return-on-investment, program evaluation, and outcomes research.

“I am deeply honored to receive the HERO Mark Dundon Research Award. I truly believe that rigorous research focused on the health and economic benefits of employee health management efforts is needed now more than ever, as employers require evidence that an investment in employee health will pay off in the long-run,” said Goetzel. “Throughout its existence, HERO has been a strong proponent of workplace-based health promotion and disease prevention research and I hope to continue to work with the organization on studies that matter to the business community.”

According to Philip Swayze, chair of the HERO awards committee and senior consultant for the Health & Wellness Institute, candidates for the two awards were nominated by their peers and selected based on a review of their overall body of work in the field of employee health management. Applications were reviewed and rated by a committee of industry-leading employee health management professionals with extensive experience designing and implementing workplace wellness programs.

“There were many highly qualified nominees for these awards, many of whom have made significant contributions to our collective knowledgebase in employee health management,” said Swayze. “But in the end, the high-impact and high-profile leadership provided by Michael O’Donnell and the unparalleled volume of research and thought leadership generated by Ron Goetzel provided the committee with a clear decision.”

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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.