



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## Consensus Statement Offers Guidance on the Use of Biometric Screenings as a Workplace Wellness Tool

*Leading health organizations collaborate to offer advice on gathering employee health data through health risk assessments and biometric screenings*

EDINA, Minn. (October 22, 2013)—Three national health organizations have published new guidance today intended to help employers create more successful programs for gathering health-screening information from employees. Known as “biometric screenings,” the gathering of such information—ranging from height and weight to blood pressure and cholesterol levels—can play a key role in an employer’s workplace wellness program.

The [Health Enhancement Research Organization \(HERO\)](#), the [American College of Occupational and Environmental Medicine \(ACOEM\)](#) and the [Care Continuum Alliance \(CCA\)](#) collaborated on a consensus statement titled “[Biometric Screening for Employers](#),” which was published in the October issue of the *Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine (JOEM)*, the official publication of ACOEM.

With the growth in the popularity of employer wellness programs, the inclusion of biometric screenings is on the rise. In fact, according to a [Kaiser Family Foundation](#) report, more than 55 percent of large employers offered an onsite biometric screening in 2012. During a biometric screening, factors such as blood pressure, weight and cholesterol are taken at the worksite and used as a part of a workplace health assessment to benchmark and evaluate changes in employee health status over time. These measurements are often used as an essential component in health management and wellness programs for employees.

“Biometric screenings, combined with a review of the results with a health educator and personal goal setting, can enhance an individual’s knowledge of their health status as well as possible health conditions and issues,” said Rebecca Kelly, PhD, director of Health Promotion and Wellness at The University of Alabama and one of the leading authors of the guidance document on behalf of HERO. “A biometric screening alone is not meant to diagnose health conditions or to replace the relationship between an individual and their health care provider. It is a tool to enhance the understanding of health, while providing the motivation and monitoring needed to improve health.”

But many variables must be taken into account in order for biometric screening programs to succeed, including data collection methods, selection of appropriate populations for screening, operational issues, privacy considerations, budget limitations and others. “Biometric Screening for Employers” offers detailed suggestions on all of these and other variables, organized into four major categories to assist employers when considering biometric screening as part of an overall employee health management approach.

“With the rise of chronic disease in the United States, and an aging population, it is imperative that we take steps to keep our national workforce as healthy as possible,” said Ron Loeppke, MD, president of ACOEM. “By adhering to best practices in the use of biometric screening as a tool in employee health, our three organizations believe employers can make significant gains in their overall wellness efforts.”

The new guidance includes advice on the use of specific health measurements such as body mass index (BMI) and body fat, comparison of methods for blood testing, the impact of state and federal regulations on biometric screening, and how best to staff and run a screening program. Also included is advice on the use of vendors for delivery of screening services; the evaluation of program effectiveness; and methods for employee engagement, including communication strategies; data reports; and the use of incentives to encourage participation in wellness programs.

“Employers today realize that in order to improve their health, people need information. And the best place to start is with an assessment of your own personal health so you understand where you have opportunity to improve and where you might be at risk for serious health problems,” said Jerry Noyce, president and CEO of HERO. “Tools like a biometric screening and health assessment provide immediate feedback to the individual and the organization, and can be used to keep employees engaged in long-term health improvement if done properly. The biometric screening guidance helps companies achieve this goal.”

The authors state that biometric screenings succeed when they are “part of a comprehensive health management program, prioritizing the health and wellbeing of employees, specifically designed with targeted goals, and evaluated for effectiveness and engagement.” In the 2012 annual report for the HERO Employee Health Management Best Practice Scorecard in Collaboration with Mercer, survey responses from more than 600 employers indicate companies that offer biometric screening in the context of a comprehensive workplace wellness program that fosters a supportive culture, leadership support and strong employee communications realize better health (37 percent reported greater health risk improvement) and financial outcomes (34 percent reported lower health care trend) than those that offer biometric screening alone.

“CCA’s members and the employers they serve will welcome this timely guidance based on the best practices of implementing workplace wellness programs,” said Fred Goldstein, interim executive director of the Care Continuum Alliance. “Biometric screenings are an important component of population health management, as they establish a baseline and follow the individual health status over time. Employers can use de-identified aggregate data to better define and design their wellbeing programs and health plan benefits to meet the unique needs of their employees.”

Last year, *JOEM* published a similar guidance document for employers engaged in the creation of employee health programs, titled “[Guidance for a Reasonably Designed, Employer-Sponsored Wellness Program Using Outcomes-Based Incentives](#).” That guidance was intended to help employers who use incentives in their health management and wellness programs improve health and lower costs while protecting employees from discrimination and unaffordable coverage.

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**About the *Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine*** — The *Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine* ([www.joem.org](http://www.joem.org)) is the official publication of the American College of Occupational and Environmental Medicine. Edited to serve as a guide for physicians, nurses, and researchers, the clinically oriented research articles are an excellent source for new ideas, concepts, techniques, and procedures that can be readily applied in the industrial or commercial employment setting.

**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](http://www.the-hero.org).

**About ACOEM** — The American College of Occupational and Environmental Medicine (ACOEM) represents nearly 4,500 physicians specializing in occupational and environmental medicine. Founded in 1916, ACOEM is the largest medical society in the United States dedicated to promoting the health of workers through preventive medicine, clinical care, disability management, research, and education. For more information, visit [www.acoem.org](http://www.acoem.org).

**About the Care Continuum Alliance** – The Care Continuum Alliance represents more than 200 organizations and individuals and aligns all stakeholders on the care continuum toward improving population health. Through advocacy, research and education, the Care Continuum Alliance advances strategies to improve care quality and outcomes and reduce preventable costs for the well and those with and at risk of chronic conditions. Learn more at [www.carecontinuumalliance.org](http://www.carecontinuumalliance.org).