



## NEWS RELEASE

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### Technology with a purpose

*HERO survey shows wearable devices gaining traction in wellness programs, why employers invest in this technology*

**Edina, Minn. (June 22, 2015)** — Technology has the potential to change the way people live, work and play. Wearable fitness tracking devices are the latest example of technology that is being used to influence and change health behaviors, with the long-term goal of improving health through increased physical activity and weight loss. A new study from [HERO \(the Health Enhancement Research Organization\)](#) examines why and how employers are using trackers in their workplace wellness programs.

The HERO study began in the fall of 2014, and between October 2014 and January 2015, approximately 190 employers (63 percent of whom had less than 5,000 employees) completed an online survey about their use of this rapidly growing and evolving technology. Nearly half of those surveyed said they offer a fitness tracker as part of their workplace wellness program. Furthermore, a recent report from technology consultants, [Endeavors Partners](#), shows that one in 10 Americans over the age of 18 owns a fitness tracker, and that U.S. employers will integrate more than 13 million wearable health and fitness tracking devices into their employee wellness programs by 2018.

“Individuals are drawn to technology like fitness trackers in part because it’s new and cool, but also because these devices rely on gaming techniques and social support that keeps people connected to like-minded individuals and keeps them moving toward their goal,” said Jessica Grossmeier, Ph.D., vice president of research for HERO and co-author of this study. “For employers who successfully integrate fitness trackers into their workplace wellness programs, this is a win-win because they can help employees meet individual goals while moving the larger organization toward its corporate health goals.”

Results of the HERO study, which can be found in the report [“Wearables in Wellness. Employers use of wearable tracking devices in wellness programs.”](#) includes the following findings:

- 46 percent of employers said they offer fitness trackers as part of their wellness programs.
- Of these employers who offer a fitness tracker,
  - 51 percent pay the total cost of the device and
  - 53 percent extend this option to spouses and dependents.

- To receive a fitness tracker, the most common requirements for employees include signing up for a program or campaign, completing a health assessment survey, or earning “points” as part of their overall program participation.
- Nearly 22 percent of employers don’t have any requirements in place for employees who want to receive the device, other than to simply register to receive one.

“Over the past decade, research has confirmed what common sense tells us, good health is good business, because [healthy employees tend to be at work more and are more productive](#) than their unhealthy counterparts,” said Jack Bastable, national practice leader, employee health and productivity, for CBIZ and co-author of the HERO study. “This study supports other research that shows growth in the use of fitness trackers in wellness programs, but the HERO study goes one step further by exploring why and how employers are incorporating fitness trackers and what their current experiences have been.”

Although skeptics of the wellness industry like to believe employers have ulterior motives for offering employees fitness trackers, 94 percent of employers in the HERO survey said they offer fitness trackers simply as a way to increase physical activity among employees. In addition:

- 77 percent want to increase employee engagement with their health.
- 74 percent want to add a “fun factor” to their wellness program.
- 62 percent want to see improvements in employee health.
- 51 percent want to see improvement in performance and productivity.

“A criticism of fitness trackers, whether used independently or offered through an employer wellness program, has centered around the suspicion that people don’t use devices consistently or for long periods of time, which calls to question the level of behavior change that is achieved,” said Grossmeier. “The HERO study shows that long-term use can be achieved when devices are supported by a comprehensive wellness program, although there is still much to learn about the role that technology and fitness trackers play in health behavior change.”

The HERO survey found that:

- 59 percent of employers said the majority of employees were still using their fitness trackers more than 12 weeks after launch.
- 54 percent said the majority of employees were using their devices six months after program launch.
- 95 percent of employers said they will continue offering fitness trackers as part of their wellness program due to high employee satisfaction with the devices.

To learn more about HERO research, including this study, visit [www.hero-health.org](http://www.hero-health.org). Or attend a free webinar on this topic hosted by HERO on Tuesday, July 14 from 1:00 to 2:00, CT. Register for the webinar by visiting: <https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/7865045633713140226>.

**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). Follow us on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#) or [LinkedIn](#).