

Evidence for Health Promotion Programs: The Use of Employee Health Fair Data
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Problem: Current statistics reveal serious increases in the numbers of overweight and obese citizens with subsequent linkages to chronic illness. These alarming trends require immediate attention and strategic action to improve the Nation's health. Today's society often observes hospital employees as role models for health practices; therefore, a first step in the deliberate pursuit of national health is to assess the health of hospital employees.

Evidence: Health status, perceptions, habits, and needs of 1295 employees working in a Midwestern acute care hospital were examined from 2003 to 2005 during annual health fairs.

Strategy: Advanced practice nurses targeted health-enhancing opportunities at each subsequent health fair, and, as a result, the health fairs became more sophisticated and offered more information relevant to healthier lifestyles.

Practice Change: Health promotion programs and materials were emphasized for hospital employees.

Evaluation: Outcomes measured during health fairs included actual health status, defined by measures of height, weight, body mass index (BMI), self-reported ratings of stress, and metabolic screens for total cholesterol, high density lipoproteins (HDL), cholesterol/HDL ratios, blood sugar levels, and systolic and diastolic blood pressures. Paper and pencil questionnaires elicited information about perceptions of health, health habits, and health needs.

Results: Over time, participants experienced significantly lower total cholesterol readings, higher HDL levels, lower systolic blood pressures, and increased perceptions of health. During the three-year period, average body weight and BMI did not change significantly; however, a slightly higher percentage of individuals fell into overweight and obese categories for body weight. Seventy-four percent of participants reported feeling overweight and desired to lose an average of 32 pounds per individual; 51% of participants wanted to increase their daily physical activity levels.

Recommendations: Weight control and exercise were predominant needs assessed in hospital employees. A major weight control program was recently recommended for targeting improvements in health for hospital employees.

Bibliography:

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