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MEDICAL COST ANALYSIS OF A SCHOOL DISTRICT WORKSITE WELLNESS PROGRAM

This study explores whether participation in a worksite wellness program differed by age and sex and was associated with frequency and the average cost of medical claims. Healthcare cost data were available for school district employees during the academic years ending in 2009 through 2014. The wellness program was available in the later three years. The frequency and average cost of medical claims were compared between the three years prior to and the three years during the wellness program. Wellness program participation increased from 65.6% 2011-12 to 79.7% 2012-13. The increase occurred within age groups and for males and females. The average age of program participants was significantly lower in 2011-12 (48.2 vs. 49.4, $p = 0.0099$), but similar in the next two years. Participation in at least one behavior change campaign in each year was 52.1%, 53.7%, and 73.7% of all wellness program participants, respectively. Female employees were significantly more likely to complete one or more behavior change campaigns in each year of the wellness program ($p < 0.0001$). The percentage of employees filing at least one claim per time period were higher for those in the wellness program ($p < 0.0001$), but average medical claims payments were lower for those in the wellness program. After subtracting program costs, the cost savings from the wellness program was \$3,612,402. The benefit-to-cost ratio was 3.6. Therefore, participation in the wellness program resulted in lower average medical claim costs than non-participation but number of claims were higher in program participants.

Biography

Ray M. Merrill received his academic training in statistics and public health. He is a former Cancer Prevention Fellow at the National Cancer Institute, USA, and visiting scholar at the International Agency for Research on Cancer in Lyon, France. He has won various awards for his research and is a Fellow of the American College of Epidemiology and of the American Academy of Health Behavior. He is the author of over 250 peer-reviewed articles and the following books: *Environmental Epidemiology*, *Reproductive Epidemiology*, *Principles of Epidemiology Workbook*, *Fundamentals of Epidemiology and Biostatistics*, *Behavioral Epidemiology*, and *Statistical Methods in Epidemiologic Research*. He teaches classes in epidemiology and Biostatistics and is a full professor in the Department of Health Science, College of Life Sciences at Brigham Young University.

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