

The Partnership for Workplace Mental Health and Meritain Health Announce Results of Employee Survey

New Survey Reveals Employee Opinions on Mental Health Issues

Results from a new national survey conducted by Meritain Health in collaboration with the Partnership for Workplace Mental Health shows that employees know mental health is important to their overall health and that stress significantly affects them in the workplace. It showed that 95.6 percent think mental and behavioral health is very (75.3 percent) or somewhat (20.3 percent) important in determining overall health.

The study, however, also revealed that more than half of employers do not address mental health matters in the workplace and many employees don't even understand their current mental health benefits.

The study of 411 full-time employees with medical benefits, commissioned by Meritain and the Partnership for Workplace Mental Health, found that employees are keenly aware that stress negatively affects them in the workplace:

94 percent believe their stress level affects job performance, and:

- 55.8 percent said stress affects their general attitude;
- 39.4 percent said stress affects relationships with co-workers;
- 36.2 percent said stress affects their productivity;
- 35.5 percent said stress affects the quality of their work;
- 33.2 percent said stress affects their relationship with their supervisor.

The national survey discovered that workers think their employers do not place enough emphasis on mental health and do not adequately communicate their current mental health benefits to employees:

- 52 percent of employees said their employer does not address stress, work/life balance or mental/behavioral health with employees.
- 40 percent of employees said they aren't aware of what mental/behavioral health benefits are offered by their employer.
- 35.7 percent of employees would be more likely to use their mental/behavioral health benefits if their employer did a better job of promoting them.

The study was conducted for Partnership for Workplace Mental Health and Meritain Health, and it was designed to evaluate full-time employees' opinions about mental and behavioral health, as well as their opinions about their employer's approach to including these conditions in discussions about wellness. All phone surveying occurred from July 18-26, 2007, and was conducted by International Consumer Research, a public opinion research firm based in Media, Pa.

Key Survey Findings

- 95.6 percent think mental and behavioral health is very (75.3 percent) or somewhat (20.3 percent) important in determining overall health.
- More than half of employers do not address mental health matters in the workplace and many employees don't even understand their current mental health benefits.

These survey results illustrate the need for employers to better make the connection between untreated mental health conditions and lost productivity, offer more comprehensive mental health benefits and better promote these benefits to their employees,” said Dr. Luter. “Preventing costly medical conditions begins with communication, and we look forward to starting the conversation.”

Survey Results Fit With National Statistics

This survey fits with national statistics illustrating the staggering effects mental health issues have on the workplace and employees, including absenteeism, presenteeism, and loss of productivity and exacerbation of physical illnesses:

- The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention found stress to be accountable for nearly 75 percent of all doctor visits.
- Nearly 70 percent of workers said job stress is worse than it was a decade ago, 80 percent of workers feel stress and 40 percent view their work as very or extremely stressful.
- People with depression lose 5.6 productive hours a week from health problems, according to a study in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*.
- The annual cost of presenteeism is now \$180 billion, surpassing the cost of the more well-known workplace productivity killer, absenteeism, which stands at \$118 billion, according to a recent study by the Society for Human Resource Management.
- A 2007 study by *Employee Benefit News* and the Partnership for Workplace Mental Health found that human resources executives rank mental illness as the health issue with the largest effect on indirect costs.

About the Partnership for Workplace Mental Health

The Partnership for Workplace Mental Health is a program of the American Psychiatric Foundation which advances effective employers approaches to mental health by combining the knowledge and experience of the American Psychiatric Association and employers. For more information, visit www.workplacementalhealth.org

About Meritain Health

Meritain Health is the nation’s largest independent provider of services for self-funded health plans. Meritain Health serves over 1,400 self-funded clients and over a million members nationally. The company provides plan administration, innovative wellness, medical management, disease management, network management, and cost management services. Meritain Health is also a pioneer and now the leading independent provider of Consumer Directed Health Plans. Meritain Health employs over 1,350 people, with headquarters in Buffalo, N.Y., and regional offices in 28 cities across the country. For more information, visit <http://www.meritain.com>.

