

Data Analysis

In November 1993, Wellpower sent a survey assessing health behaviors and opinions on the Wellpower Program, to 1202 randomly selected UNUM of America, Duncanson and Holt and UNUM Corporation Portland, Maine employees. 718 surveys were returned, a response rate of sixty percent. Twenty seven percent of the respondents were male, 73 percent female. The average age was 37 years old. It is clear, looking over the age distribution since 1985 (the inception of the Wellpower Program) that employees are getting older, with a larger proportion of employees over 35 than when the program began.

The Wellpower survey asked respondents about their exercise, smoking, stress, weight, seat belt use, blood pressure and cholesterol and participation in Wellpower. Wellpower has surveyed employees several times since the program began in 1985. This report will compare survey data from 1985, 1991 and 1993.

Exercise

In 1985, before the start of the Wellpower Program, sixty percent of employees reported exercising 3 or more times a week. By 1991, only 41 percent of employees reported this amount of exercise and in 1993 forty-four percent reported exercising three or more times per week. Although there was not a significant change between 1991 and 1993, the change from 1985 is significantly different. This change is explained, in part, because of the aging of the employee population (with a typical reduction in exercise as people get older and growing family responsibilities), and also due to changes in definition of what constitutes exercise (gardening, walking from the parking lot were included in peoples definition of exercise in 1985, this is not true in 1993).

Among those who do not exercise regularly (less than two times a week), the 993 survey data also showed a significant increase in respondents stating that they do not like to exercise. There was a significant decrease, since 1985, in the proportion who felt that exercise is inconvenient. Sixty percent of respondents who did not exercise regularly in 1993 stated that they did not exercise because they did not have time.

Smoking

Since 1985, UNUM's smoking rate has decreased significantly among men and women and as a total percentage. In 1985 seventeen percent of males reported smoking, in 1993 the proportion was 7 percent. In 1985 twenty-three percent of women reported smoking, in 1993 only 12 percent reported smoking. By 1993 the smoking rate at UNUM was 11 percent of employees, compared to 21 percent in 1985, a significant reduction of 47.6 percent.

Stress

The proportion of employees reporting being under stress all or most of the time has not changed significantly over the years, although men did report less stress than women in 1991. In 1993 a third of the survey respondents reported being under stress all or most of the time.

Weight

Since 1985, Wellpower survey results have found men to be significantly more overweight or obese, based on Body Mass Index (BMI) than women. (The BMI does take into account the higher level of muscle mass that men have.) While women have held steady in terms of the proportion who are overweight and obese (around one-third), the proportion of men who are overweight and obese has grown significantly, from 43 percent in 1985, to 58 percent in 1993. Women tend to participate in weight management programs more readily than men and this may be why, while the proportion overweight and obese hasn't decreased, it has at least remained steady.

On the other hand, the proportion of men who state that they are overweight or obese has stayed at around 40 percent since 1985. The proportion of women who state they are overweight or obese has been over 50 percent since 1985. Women generally are more critical of their weight than men, but have less pounds to lose.

Cholesterol and Blood Pressure

In 1987 only thirty-five of employees reported having their cholesterol checked in the last year, by 1991 the proportion had grown significantly, to 82 percent, and remains at 83 percent in 1993. In 1993, 35.6 percent of respondents reporting having borderline high or high cholesterol, compared to 30.9 in 1991. This is not a significant change. There were no significant differences between men and women and their reported cholesterol levels.

Eight-seven percent of respondents reported having their blood pressure checked in the last year, compared to 85 percent in 1985 and 89 percent in 1991. 6.7 percent reported borderline high blood pressure in 1993 and 2 percent reported having high blood pressure.

Seat Belt Use

Employees reporting using seat belts all or most of the time has increased significantly since 1985, from 54 percent to 84 percent in 1993. Men and women use seat belts at about the same rate.

Parents using car seats all the time for their children under age four grew from 88.8 percent in 1985 to 95.5 percent in 1993.

Wellpower Participation

in 1993, fifty-one percent of employees reported participating in Wellpower in the last year, compared to 56 percent in 1991 and 49 percent in 1987. Participation by women was similar across all three years, but decreased among men in 1993.

Over half of those participating in Wellpower Programs, participated in the Wellpower Fitness Facility. Men were more likely to participate in sports programs than women (36 percent of the men, 6 percent of the women). Women are more likely than men to participate in lunch and learns (49 percent of the women, 28 percent of the men) and to participate in weight management programming (22 percent compared to 2 percent of the men). Participation in the reimbursement program and the Facility was about equal among men and women. Twenty-six percent reported using the reimbursement program.

Respondents were asked to rate the benefits of the Wellpower Program for themselves, others and UNUM. A rating of 1 was "very poor", 3 was "average", 4 was "good" and 5 was "excellent". Wellpower was rated above 4 (good) in almost all categories, the exception was that it was rated slightly below "good" by non-participants in terms of the benefits of the Wellpower Program to themselves. Non-participants rated the program highly in terms of its benefits to UNUM and to others.

The best way for employees to hear about the Wellpower Program was through proofs (81 percent), brochures (29 percent), posters (20 percent), Wellpower Bulletin Board (19 percent) and other employees (14 percent). These percentages don't add up to 100 because respondents could choose more than one way to hear about Wellpower. There was no difference between men and women and the best way to hear about Wellpower.

Forty-one percent of respondents reporting reading Healthlines, a quarterly publication from the Medical Division, 37 percent reported that they had never seen it. Fifty-seven percent of respondents reported reading Wellpower's Monthly Events Calendars, 22 percent reported never seeing it. There was no difference between men and women and reading either of these publications.

Very few respondents had suggestions for other programs Wellpower might offer. The suggestions included expanding the Facility hours, putting more free weights in the Facility, expanding the Wellpower reimbursement program, better nutrition education in the cafeterias, alternative health programming (yoga, massage), offering more intown programming and programming directed to large people.

Summary

Overall, the results of this survey are very good, confirming substantial improvements in employee health behavior. With a high response rate of sixty percent, we can be confident that the sample is not biased and reliably reflects the health practices and concerns of the general UNUM, Portland based population.

The survey results suggest more effort be placed in bringing men into the Wellpower Program, bringing people in who do not like to exercise (by making exercise more fun) and examining innovative ways of getting more employees involved in the program (targeting certain markets, employee/division meetings, screening programs, reviewing the reimbursement program) that focus on providing timely health information in short time frames, since a perennial problem among non-participants is lack of time. Finally, better channels need to be found to distribute Wellpower publications (Healthlines, Monthly Calendars) so that readership is increased.