



3-minute case study: Weight loss for clinical staff

By Erin Graham | January 24, 2019

The problem

It's no secret that healthcare is filled with unhealthy caregivers, who carry a great burden of chronic illness, stress, burnout and depression. Central Illinois' Gibson Area Hospital & Health Services set out to put a dent in this uncomfortable truth, and to control above-average employee healthcare costs.

"If you save one person from having a heart attack, it could be a \$100,000 bill you don't have to pay," says CEO Rob Schmitt. That's a big savings for a small, rural operation like Gibson, the likes of which are fast disappearing.

The solution

Schmitt launched a homegrown employee wellness program that not only inspired employee engagement from the get-go, but also built upon participants' progress year after year.

They started by understanding employees' needs. Gibson's medical staff reviewed clinical data from Gibson-insured employees' physicals, and decided to tackle high BMI by helping staff lose weight.

The motivation? A healthy dose of dough-re-mi. If staff got their BMIs below 25 or dropped it by four points, they got \$300 back from their insurance—about a 30 percent refund. Spouses could participate too, giving staff the chance to earn back double. Employees were also charged a 10 percent premium if they smoked.

The hospital added benefits to help staff get healthy. Employees and their families got half off rates at the hospital's upscale fitness facility and could take free smoking cessation classes.

Gibson's wellness program has expanded over the past four years. Smoking cessation help is offered to spouses, and the BMI challenge now has an additional set of fitness goals.

The outcome

Schmitt plans to work with medical staff to continue to fine-tune the program and find ways to quantify results.

"We can't really say we've saved five heart attacks, but we can say we have improved health of many of our staff through weight reduction, and about 30 percent of smokers have quit," he says.

Erin Graham is a frequent contributor to athenaInsight.

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