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Creating a “Healthier Us” in the Workplace: Promoting a Healthy Lifestyle Through Evidence Based Nutrition Education

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BACKGROUND

Having a healthy workforce benefits not only the employees themselves, but the employer as well. Healthier employees reduce health care costs and tend to stay with their employers longer.¹ While the exact impact employee wellness programs have may be difficult to measure, it is important that health education provided is evidence based. Studies released by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Community Guide Task Force concluded that “evidence based programs can achieve long term health improvements in worksite populations.”²

The promotion of health in the workplace is advocated throughout Lehigh Valley Health Network (LVHN). My Total Health, formerly called Well U., is one means in which LVHN creates and supports a healthier work environment. My Total Health “recognizes that the health and well-being of LVHN employees is crucial to provide high-level care and service to our patients and the community”. Sodexo, the food and nutrition service provider for LVHN, also advocates a healthy lifestyle for employees and all other patrons alike through their Mindful program. In keeping with the goals of My Total Health and the Mindful program, in October of 2013 the LVHN oncology dietitians developed “Healthy Us” presentations. These 10-15 minute, evidence based presentations, on health and wellness focus on recent nutrition topics and trends. “Healthy Us” presentations are provided during Cancer Support Services (CSS) staff meetings; they educate on average 30 management and support staff employees including nurse navigators, social workers and clinicians.

Figure 1: Areas benefited by health promotion programs within the workplace.



Figure 2: Examples of “Healthy Us” Topics.



RESULTS

Thirty CSS staff were surveyed with an 83% (25/30) response rate. One hundred percent of staff reported they learned something new from the presentations and utilized the information provided to make positive lifestyle changes.

Survey results were overwhelmingly positive with 70.83% of the participants rating the program as “excellent” and 29.17% rating the program as “very good.” Of those who responded, 100% provided topic suggestions for future “Healthy Us” presentations.

Figure 3: Impact of “Healthy Us” presentations as reported by participants.

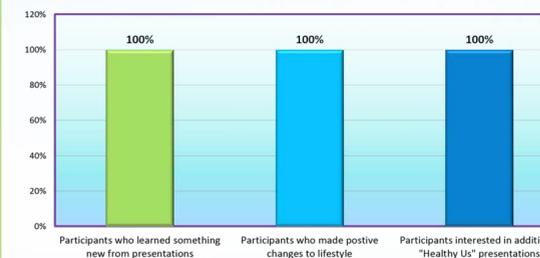


Figure 4: Participant reported positive lifestyle changes.

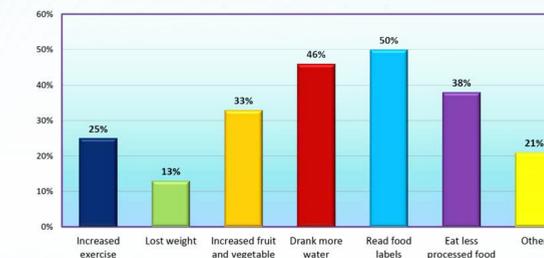


Figure 5: Overall acceptance of “Healthy Us” presentations.



OBJECTIVE

LVHN oncology dietitians have a passion for sharing nutrition knowledge with patients as well as colleagues. As recognized experts in the field of nutrition, we were motivated to share our knowledge with fellow employees to promote improved health and wellness within our department. Our goal was to provide evidence based information in an engaging way to educate our peers and encourage them to make healthy lifestyle changes. In an effort to reach more colleagues, “Healthy Us” presentations have been made available to other LVHN oncology departments.

PROCESS:

- Created and presented a variety of “Healthy Us” presentations to CSS from 2013 to 2017.
- Surveyed all CSS staff to assess the influence and acceptance of “Healthy Us” presentations.
- Provided a “Healthy Us” presentation to the Oncology Management Team to expand our reach to other departments within the Cancer Institute.

PLAN

Evidence based nutrition and wellness presentations have been well received by CSS staff with all respondents reporting positive lifestyle changes. LVHN oncology dietitians plan to continue providing this service to the CSS staff and other departments within the Cancer Institute, incorporating respondent requested topics.

References:

- Berry, LL, Mirabito, A.M., Baun, W.B: What's the Hard Return on Employee wellness programs? Harvard Business Review Dec 2012
- Health Promotion in the Workplace. O'donnell, Michael, Art and Science of Health and Promotion Institute



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