



## EDITORIAL

# Promotion of healthy habits at work for the welfare of the working population<sup>☆</sup>



## Promoción de hábitos saludables en el trabajo para el bienestar de la población trabajadora

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The Colombian Heart Foundation is sponsored and promoted by the Colombian Society of Cardiology and Cardiovascular Surgery and four years ago it began a sustained process of restructuring to orientate itself in the promotion of healthy habits and lifestyles, for which the “Responsible Hearts” program was created.

Today the Foundation has three strategic focuses which are the sustainability guarantee for the coming decades: the Certification Program of Healthy Organizations, the Training Center focusing on programs of Basic Life Support and the Festivals of Responsible Hearts for enterprises and educational centers, all framed in the pedagogical approach of responsible Hearts.

The Program of Certification of Healthy Organizations was born of the need to offer the business world of the country an option, so that both employers and workers as well as the health insurance could have the opportunity to improve the health of people in the working place, under the premise that a labor scenario must always preserve health.

For its part, the Colombian Heart Foundation traced the proposals of the program promoting habits and healthy lifestyles, “responsible Hearts” and decided to extend the benefit of the initiative to promote health at work with a certification guide that could allow to manage the health of employees.

For the Certification Program, following the “system of risk management of cardiovascular disease and other chronic non-communicable diseases Guide”, promoting an organization as healthy, can result in:

- Decreased absenteeism and presenteeism labor.
- Timely detection of health problems.
- Increased well-being (physical and mental health).
- Optimization of the working environment.
- Increased productivity.
- Increased self-esteem and well-being of the worker.
- Increased employee commitment to the company.
- Demonstration of increased commitment of the company to employees.
- Improvement of the reputation and image of the company.

It is important to highlight that a healthy organization is based on multisectoral cooperation and will be effective if all members of the company are committed.

Meanwhile, to achieve the goal of promoting healthy employees in a healthy organization, the following characteristics must be taken into account:

- *Participation.* All workers are part of the program.
- *Integration.* The promotion of a healthy organization must be integrated into all major decisions and in all areas of a company, to be also extended to insurance with insurers of occupational hazards, health service companies, health insurance, supplementary programs and compensation funds, among others.
- *Leadership.* The executive team and board of the company must lead the process, in addition to

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becoming examples to be followed by the group of workers.

- *Management system.* All programs, activities and strategies must respond to the approach of the guide, so that there be a follow-up oriented to the continuous improvement by analyzing needs, setting priorities, planning, execution, monitoring and assessments.
- *Healthy habits.* A healthy organization must have a permanent program of promoting habits and healthy lifestyles with propitiatory environments, so as to achieve combined strategy for identification and control, as well as risk factors with education and communication regarding the protective factors responsible for maintaining health.

### Basic postulates of the certification program of healthy organizations

- (a) It is based on a broad concept of occupational health, which extends traditional occupational health programs to cardiovascular and other chronic noncommunicable diseases.
- (b) Binds all actors of the health system to act based on their legal obligations fulfilling specific roles within the program.
- (c) It is part of the plans of Prevention of Occupational Risks.
- (d) It must adapt to reality and the size of each enterprise with a team of coordination or Healthy Organization Coordination Committee.
- (e) It is based on the identification and classification of cardiovascular risk factors of all employees to generate a baseline.
- (f) It is based on the guidelines of the guidance of the management system to track the reality found, builds partnerships with assurance and sets as the goal to achieve clinical aims for their employees.
- (g) It creates a permanent program, in parallel, to promote healthy habits and lifestyles to generate culture of self-care.
- (h) It allows the evaluation of the entire program and the guide on a permanent basis, to make evident through indicators the result of management in the assessment of risk factors, and in the appropriation of messages to a healthy lifestyle.

The success of the certification program for healthy organizations depends, to a large extent, on the fact that it may be perceived as a responsibility and need of the organization, and that the certification guide can be integrated into the existing management systems.

### Social responsibility: a look at the health of employees

The promotion of a healthy organization is intended to be framed as an initiative of the company directed to its workers within the framework of corporate social responsibility that promotes health and wellness.

In its mission to sensitize, mobilize and support companies to manage their business from the social point of view and responsibly to achieve sustainable development,

the Colombian Heart Foundation created the Certification Program for Healthy Organizations as a model to promote partnership between actors who can intervene in certain social issues, in order to give concrete solutions to global problems.

Programs of health promotion in the workplace to combat sedentary lifestyle and unhealthy eating habits are effective in improving health-related outcomes such as risk factors for obesity, diabetes and cardiovascular disease. Increase employee productivity, improve corporate image and moderating health care costs are some of the arguments that can move the top management to start and invest in programs of health promotion in the workplace, within the framework of corporate social responsibility.

### Reality obliges us to apply changes in lifestyle

The individual lifestyles are one of the major determinants on the state of health of the population. The proposal by the World Health Organization from numerous applied research in all corners of the globe concludes in a forceful way that the generalized adoption of a healthy lifestyle could reduce overall mortality up to 5%.

For the Colombian Society of Cardiology and Cardiovascular Surgery and the Colombian Heart Foundation, cardiovascular disease is the leading cause of premature death associated with modifiable life habits and the one which more contributes to the processes of disability that are recorded in Colombia.

For Responsible Hearts, health has a dimension of sustainable well-being and quality of life, necessary reason to make changes to improve the lifestyles not only on high-risk groups, but in the general population. If it is achieved even to a small extent, the population will obtain maximal cumulative and sustainable benefits. It is intended to influence in the healthy individuals, to gestate a culture of self-care, to make that when people arrive in the workplaces and get to their jobs, may preserve their health instead of losing it just there.

The Certification Program for Healthy Organizations poses therefore to increase the efficiency of interventions and contribute to a more rational management of human resources, betting for the complementation of individualized interventions with acts directed to the entire community.

From several studies it has been possible to identify that the patterns of morbidity and mortality currently occurring in our society are closely related to behaviors or life habits. It is therefore necessary to evaluate if such behaviors predispose people to early onset of risk factors for cardiovascular disease, which is just where the communication and educational intervention as support to the voluntary behavioral change becomes of paramount importance.

The workplace can become the ideal incentive to generate the culture of care. Most people spend a third of their life at work and from there can influence their family and society in general. In this context of interaction, promoting habits and healthy lifestyles acquires a definite role in organizations, which may be enhanced if the decision to pursue a certifiable standard as the one offered by the Colombian Heart Foundation, with the support of the Colombian Society of Cardiology and Cardiovascular Surgery, is made.