Better Employees or Invasion of Privacy

[Name of the Writer]

[Name of the Institution]

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**Introduction**

The employers' wellness programs aim to develop a better environment for the welfare of employees and the protection of their privacy. It is supposed to promote the health and service of workers in a professional setting. According to the American Association of Retired Persons, to stop the implementation of certain new rules wellness programs cost the subordinates more than the management. These programs in diverse societies of the United States force the worker to reveal his/her health condition or disability which can lead to discrimination. There is 30 percent cost of the individual health insurance which can be translated into thousands of dollars. However, it is important to consider that is *it ethical for companies to offer fitness trackers and wellness programs to lower their insurance premiums and promote healthy employee behavior or is it an invasion into employee's lives and private health information?*

**Discussion**

The answer to the above question implies that there is controversy in the workplace wellness program which offers employees a financial incentive for undergoing a health screening. It also aims to reduce the cholesterol level through specific exercises however an employee according to the American Disabilities Act and genetic privacy laws, cannot disclose their private information. They are open and free in deciding their matters of individual concerns, and they can reveal anything on their own. Forcing them to unfold information will be considered an invasion into the lives of employees. Again there is another question that how it is true that voluntary information is fit against the financial incentives given by the higher management. The first American program for the wellness of employees began in 1960.

The program incorporated exercise on gyms which were installed at the workplace for workers to remain free from stress and to stay healthy (Ammendolia et al., 2016) It was an optional privilege for the worker to move into gym side and there was no concept of checking them. However in the contemporary era, efforts of wellness became a complicated animal and the proponents claim that these are effective for the safety of human lives. Opponents of the program argue that they have no worth and it is the tool to monitor the activities of an employee. There is invasive of privacy and workers have to pass by health risk assessment and biometric screenings. It became the monitoring habit for the higher management to collect data about the particular worker.

There are ethical values that create the difference in the opinion, and it is supposed to be collected by a third party provider where the discrimination occurs as a result of information divulged about the worker. The vendors at the corporate sector have to be licensed or comply with clinical guidelines. Al Lewis supports the evidence as an employee of health care education company who is also the author of three books expose the fraud of corporate industry. He argues that results, techniques, and the information are highly suspected and employers may provide limited awards in exchange for answers from the respective worker (Ammendolia et al., 2016). Usually, it is experienced that medical examination and the disabilities are part of a wellness program and it is significantly linked with a health plan.

Scholars are of the view that wellness is both a discriminatory practice and invasion of privacy and these are not related with the job performance. Most of the people lie about their use of cigarette, drug, alcohol and some take their blood as a sample to check the accuracy of information given by the employee. There is one thing that they should invade the privacy of individual for the use of opioid. A question arises here that employees’ health is the purpose of these programs or it is the advantage to achieve financial prospects (Ammendolia et al., 2016). There are sixty millions of employees who are forced to submit to their employers like playing doctor or forego substantial incentives. It is a kind of power play where the transfer of wealth from more impoverished employees having worse health status. These workers can achieve wellness goals through the exercise and collection of money in a systematic way.

Among the major concerns of those who are against the wellness is the lack of reliable protection against a breach of employee health information. To stop access to the private information of health, employer needs to demonstrate their method and technology. An attorney provided that higher management or the employer have no right to sneak around the anti-discrimination laws. Those workers who are well-aware of their employees have taken reasonable precautions concerning their sensitive data will be more likely to participate in such types of programs. There is a Health Insurance Probability and Accountability Act which may cause regulatory penalties as well as a backlash of the employee. Well-experienced and old employee feel more threatened than new and younger staff.

Some individuals shared their experienced and hide their information at a workplace, and fellow employees have heavy pressure to retire from their service before they want to. Various reasons are linked with their early retirement, but significant factors are the concerns of health-related assessment of employer. Even workers became depressed which lead to worse health conditions (Ammendolia et al., 2016). Young people lied about their weight and inflated it to win prizes. Some fearful about the penalties of a company and apply for vacations to get well before the start of a company's assessment. They also have concerns of discrimination with other workers which can lead to a generation of competition among them.

Employers cannot discriminate over the illness or medical condition as discussed by the leading scholar of medical programs (Cahalin et al., 2015). However poor health can lead to poor performance, and it can also disrupt workers’ career. There is a need for balance, and it would be unfortunate that health care costs are a burden on the respective organizations. The declining health costs are more than the others and what Americans need today is to be cautious about unemployment.

**Development of Wellness Programs**

The development and evolution of worksite wellness programs is a recent initiative. In the corporate sector, there is a remarkable phenomenon that a healthy worker is a productive worker which broadened views of companies. The initiative is taken with the frequent injuries faced by employees at the workplace. Various aspects of health are analyzed by professionals who derived that there should be a proper way to check the health of a worker. A holistic approach is applied in the contemporary plans of health care which includes the consideration of worker for reduced costs, better health, and a better work environment. Social well-being, mental and physical health of the employees is significantly crucial for any organization. The approach is not limited to the corporate sector instead it integrates the state own enterprises and organizations which also requires fitness certificate before offering the job.

The executives of business and CEOs of multinational corporations after the Second World War saw the value in staying fit (Cahalin et al., 2015). Various companies had appointed the facilities of gymnasium along with the fitness instructor for the higher management. During the decade of 1970 such programs were prevalent among the corporate sector and transformed as a precursor for today worksite wellness promotion. Some of the companies limit the plan only for higher management and for those who belong to executive class while others integrate all the employees. Various organizations are well-known for their initiatives like Pullman Company in 1879 established the athletic association along with other incentives of schools, shops and housing for their employees (Fan et al., 2015) Other executives included the President of National Cash Register was known to meet employees for horseback rides before their work.

For the recreation of employees, the company included 300-acre Park, an employee gym and twice daily exercise breaks. In the same way, Hershey Foods also develop a complex for rehabilitation of employees and their fitness. In Texas, other companies also instituted fitness programs like the Xerox, Rockwell and Texas Instruments. During the last few decade advancements in different cultures of organizations and fields contribute to Employees Assistance Programs which were limited to support workers from alcohol and became work-life assistance. In the contemporary environment, there are various continuum of care, which are related to offsite resources.

The preventive care services like the physical and medical therapy, travel medicine, chronic and specialized services and treatment of acute medical issues are included. Screening and immunization are universal, and various companies have extended their strategies to provide a comfortable atmosphere for working. For example, the plan design is X-ray radiology, vision care, dental services, fitness program, physical therapy, disease management, preventive care, pharmacy services and primary or urgent care (Madison, 2016). Despite the presence of these sectors, there is a big difference in actively managing health through continuous care. In a simple way, the traditional style to remain decent starts with complaints of a patient who faced early signs in his body.

Employees have the opportunity to keep the risk of disease away from them through early screening and before the rise of these signs. If there is an occurrence of disease, care centers can make the case management much more effective through access of employee (Schmidt & O’Connor, 2018). Over the traditional way of tackling the health issue evidence shows that coaching and face to face interaction provide effective management and reduced costs. Medical professionals provide that in the business sector worksite wellness center are useful from finance to manufacturing. The scores of employees’ satisfaction are also high, and other employees are looking for health centers for long term health programs. Such type of programs helps in encouraging workers for medication routines and regimes. They have a better understanding of overcoming long and short term health issues to reduce the costs through wellness programs.

**Does Wellness make Better Workers?**

There is no doubt in recognizing the fact that wellness makes better workers. Various programs of the physical component of health provide that approach is better than nothing. Many employees are missing out because of the negligence of health care issue. Those employers who only emphasizes real contribution often fail to realize the fact that health issues are essential and fitness of employees is significant for the productivity of an organization. All the things that affect the happiness and life of the person should be considered systematically because the employee is happy it will work productively and professionally (Stieglitz et al., 2018). Various components are related to the wellness of a worker, and these include the social, emotional and financial well-being.

The administration or the higher management should consider such type of question in their mind while devising a policy various components of wellness have to influence over each other. Like the worker having restrictions with their financial issues, he or she will significantly impact emotionally and physically. If one aspect or elements of wellness lacks it will create difficulty for an employee to perform well during the working hours (Terry, 2017). Employers need to revise their traditional approaches for the welfare of worker before diving into the connection of these elements. What an employee see or feel is the physical wellness, and it usually seems to be an important factor of welfare.

Such type of welfare element refers to the general health of the body including preventive healthcare practices, health habits, nutrition, and exercise. The positive movement of health will result in reducing the risk of chronic illness. Similarly, it will maintain a healthy weight and restrict other issues like headaches and chronic fatigue. Even the lifespan of employees can be increased through the support of physical wellness. Through specific components, welfare can be integrated like healthy lifestyle education, healthy office snacks, nutrition education, opportunities for physical activity, annual corporate flu shot clinics and the annual biometric clinics.

Same is the case with financial wellness where an employer will have to understand that it contributes to the other areas of services from the worker. It is mostly overlooked, and it has an impact on other areas of learning and managing the expenses. Financial concerns according to the learners and leading scholars are essential for physical and mental distress. The research of Green Path Financial Wellness fifty-eight percent workers reported economic illness as a problem in absenteeism (Terry, 2017). There was more than seventy percent who claim that a significant cause of stress is private capitals. A worker cannot concentrate on the job unless it is free from the worries of financial restrictions. These concerns of a worker can be reduced through the finance-focused lunch and learn sessions, education, and tuition assistance and providing resources to workers.

The economics and emotions have a very close relationship which is sometimes a bit trickier to discuss in a workplace setting (Tomczak et al., 2018). An employer does not care about the feeling and emotions of a worker. Feeling, thoughts and emotions are important and support in providing healthy well-being and mental state. Meditations and mindfulness are positive mental health practices along with stress and emotional intelligence. Various tools are available for the employer to support its work and have productive work like the resource and education for mental health, stress management programs, mental health days, group deep breathing exercises and the onsite mediation programs. Among these programs, social wellness is also an essential factor that is overlooked by a head of the corporations. Loneliness in the workplace has negative consequences which should be removed by enhancing social connection with employees.

Overall well-being, job satisfaction, and happiness are related to the social life of an individual. Lonely employees will feel a disconnection from their jobs which contributes to lower work performance. Through various measures, an employer has the opportunity to connect these lonely workers like creating social areas in the office, wellness challenges, healthy potlucks, work celebrations, book clubs, and team outing and activities. The holistic approach, flexibility, connected wellness activities and asking questions from the employees are some of the measures that can be taken into consideration for the reasonable progress of worker (Wolfe, 2018). Welfare programs are more than healthy diets and screening of workers’ bodies. Ample time and policies are required to include the factors which include multidimensional aspects of an employee.

**Privacy Concerns for Employees**

In the workplace environment, privacy issues are prevalent and employees always have concerns for their breach of privacy. In the operational plans and management support, there is considerable need for protecting the personal records and information regarding the health of the patient (Wolfe, 2018). The screening of the body along with other aspects should not be a waste of time and money. Some workers hesitate to share their performance and refuse to provide data. The privacy policy of many fitness trackers is vague and ever-changing. There are various organizations which create a controversy by offering respect for privacy and end their commitment to sharing the information to third parties. Even the bloggers and medical specialists are of the view that privacy risks are low in the contemporary programs of wellness because calories, steps, and activities are non-descriptive.

Body Media and Fitbit are the two examples which offer employer wellness programs with the offer of privacy agreements. These contracts mean to prevent the employer from accessing information about the workers who did not share their issues. In the aggregated form the wellness program of the companies sees specific results from the individual employee. Integrative platforms and biometric wearable are introduced through the advancement of technology. For the preparation of this change wellness program must re-elevate legal implications and there should be incentives for employees’ engagement strategies and simplifying rollout procedures (Wolfe, 2018). Observer provided that the rise of healthcare cost in the corporate sector might lead to increase participation of workers in wellness programs.

There can be other options for the employers to increase employment for programs through certain penalties and the reward that depends upon how they take care of their health. Regular monitoring can enroll in healthcare management programs with an increased number of workers. Maintaining the security and privacy of health information collection should be the preference. Workers are sensitive about the security of their services and data shared under certain programs. Even a small doubt can result in undermining capabilities of willingness to participate in the particular activity (Buettner, 2015). Kaiser Family Foundation in a recent report found that around forty percent of the workers of large firms offer a health risk assessment.

Their offer is the tool to bring worker under observation and screen their body for monitoring. The health-related assessment contain specific questions which include depression, anxiety, and stress. How frequent the individuals are towards the consumption of illicit drugs or alcohol. Information also included the prescription of medications along with other medical treatment. The legal community also pay little attention to the risks that are involved in the collection and storing of health information. Participants under the workplace wellness programs have serious concerns. Federal Office of the Civil Rights function outside a group health program which is not the subject to security rules and privacy. Adhering to the guidelines is a good idea for eliminating privacy concerns. The success of the program is based on addressing the importance of confidentiality and investing the time and resources to ensure that the employee is comfortable with wellness initiatives.

The industry of workplace wellness program is estimated to be worth of 6 billion with a vendor selling companies. These corporations are stand-alone programs that are an optional part of health insurance, and studies have questioned the efficacy of programs. Such type of initiatives support the reduction of health care cost, and some scholars have accused the plan to hurt workers by causing more stress (Buettner, 2015). Two third of the workers serving in the US-based corporations offer the same type of programs. There is 99 percent of firms having workers to provide at least one wellness program and of these programs seventy percent provided some financial incentives. The reduction of insurance premium also offered companies to encourage workers for their excessive participation.

There will be the extensive need for proper oversight to reduce the risk of privacy. The California law review paper reflected that insufficient protection for employees’ health data contributes to the discrimination among the workers. Certain actions require from the senior management to mitigate the risks of privacy (Buettner, 2015). These include the careful reading of consent forms for health data collection — understanding and usage of data systematically and professionally. Third party vendor or the employer must be involved in the process. Assurance should be given to the employees that the decisions of the employer will not influence the workers.

**Data Collection & Analytics**

Privacy is a very important aspect of employer wellness program, however data collection and analytics are more important than security. President Lyndon B. Johnson in 1965 signed off the piece of legislation that would grow into what we know today as Medicaid and Medicare. The health care centers have to change their information along with an internal storage system because these are an expensive system that would grow into the overarching system of health care. Various corporations are investing in technologies and dictating their departments to measure the initiatives of wellness. More than two hundred executives of the Harvard Business Review unfolded that in the next two years 48 percent of them would invest in a predictive analytics system. Various metrics are used to capture and try the initiatives of wellness.

Outcome-based Metrics and Participation-based metrics are the two common aspects which include the efficacy of wellness program by many people in given population along with reductions in health care spending and achievements of health goals (Buettner, 2015). The usage of software can simplify the process of health analytics, and it paints a great picture of efficacy which took countless resources to record 3 years of data on approximately fifty thousand lives with more than three hundred clients. Predictive analytics have long been used in various industries like league baseball, retail, and telecommunication industry (Buettner, 2015). Even wellness of employees has been lagging in applying the best practice of the data-driven communication tools. Some predictive models pose a real challenge that is adopted continuously and learn in a dynamic world.

To influence the real-time behavior data triggers the communication process. Relevant and timely messages delivery is another barrier which is complying the rules of health and safety act. Collection and analysis of consumer data can provide insight into employers. It significantly incorporates the healthcare organizations which unfold the employees' health status while offering the basis for information of the wellness program. The social sentiment, family status, financial position, television viewing, voting history, and affiliation are the buying habits of the individual (Tomczak et al., 2018). These aspects of personality analytics give an opinion of the overall wellness of an individual. The vice president of analytics solution April Gill offers health promotional services. The consumption of data matched with the health data lab results provide the detail of making correlation needs of the person. Highest probability can be offered a lot of sports which might be a candidate for step program or playing a game.

**Conclusion**

The resources and analytics should be maintained in a manner that employee can easily be satisfied. For example, patient of diabetes who often is online can be a good candidate for an online diabetes management program. There is a need to offer resources that a patient is ready for and it should come from the employer. Data might be incorrect, or various gaps are identified and tracks how many individuals are involved in specific programs. There is controversy in offering trackers and wellness programs to lower the insurance premium and improve the health of employees. With the balanced approach it can be managed effectively, and dozens of workers can be benefited from these wellness programs.

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