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Background

In 2012, about 117 million people had one or more chronic health conditions, whereas one of four adults had two or more chronic health conditions (CDC, 2016). Health conditions such as heart disease, stroke, cancer, type 2 diabetes, obesity and arthritis are amongst the most common and preventable of all health programs (CDC, 2016). Implementing wellness programs can promote healthy living and possibly reduce behavioral risks such as tobacco use, unhealthy diets, physical inactivity and alcohol use (Keiser Foundation, 2016).

Employers at academic institutions have been making efforts to integrate health promotion services for their employees and it has been proven to have an impact on their health decisions, education and awareness. According to the Office of Human Resources at Ithaca College (IC), “Ithaca College is committed to offering comprehensive benefits, programs, and services to meet the diverse needs of our employees and their families. All of our benefits and work/life programs are designed to help you get the most out of work and life by supporting health & wellbeing, family life, education, and financial protection.”

Therefore, Ithaca College’s Department of Human Resources has adopted a wellness program called *Mind, Body, Me* in efforts to increase employee participation of health resources and workshops on campus to ultimately improve the quality of their lives. The program provides personal training, monthly workshops, annual health screenings/assessments, faculty and staff group exercises and health coaching. Although a good number of IC employees participate in the *Mind, Body, Me* program, there are a significant number that do not.

Purpose

The purpose of our study was to conduct a needs assessment and evaluation of the *Mind, Body, Me* program in efforts to provide Human Resources with recommendations on how to improve the program after analyzing participants' responses as a part of our service-learning project.

Methods

A total of 1,382 employees (343 participants and 1,037 non-participants) were recruited via emails. Out of these, 153 participants and 208 non-participants completed the survey with a return rate of 44% and 20% respectively.

Two surveys (24 questions each for both participants and non-participants) were developed based on the the literature review. The surveys were designed to measure knowledge and perception about this program, their behaviors and future needs of employees.

The surveys were distributed and data were collected using Qualtrics software.

Results

Results indicate that majority of participants enjoyed the program. Non-participants also indicated they would be willing to participate if changes were made to the infrastructure of the program. An example of a change recommended by respondents indicate that there is an issue with the mandatory biometric screening. Many respondents are uncomfortable with the idea of having these measurements taken. Furthermore, the survey indicated a high need of change in the program's marketing and resources. Participants reported having trouble utilizing the program even as a member and non-participants suggested to provide an inclusive environment. Based on these findings, a set of recommendations is presented to the Benefits Department at Ithaca College.

Recommendations

- Maximizing hours of the program outside of the traditional work day allowing for flexibility.
- Increasing outreach, development of meetings or sending out weekly emails to inform those who would like to participate in *Mind, Body, Me*.
- Organize trainers with clients earlier in the semester.
- Tracking of incentives should be more organized.
- Push for a more inclusive environment for staff members to feel welcomed upon program enrollment.
- Making biometric tests and screenings optional.

- Implementing simpler enrollment process.
- Incorporating outdoor activities into the program.
- Making the Wellness Center a space accessible to faculty and staff regardless of enrollment in Mind Body Me.
- Reducing social media usage at the Wellness Center. (Snapchat, Instagram, Twitter)

References

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Mind, Body, Me Program. (n.d.). Retrieved March, 2017, from http://www.ithaca.edu/sacl/recsports/fitnesscenter/group_exercise/mind_body_me/