

TITLE: One Intern's experience: The Benefit of Hospital Employee Wellness Programs

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LEARNING OUTCOME: The participant will be able to list one reason why employee wellness programs need to include an RD.

TEXT. Dietitians in all areas of practice are frequently asked to provide health promotion activities to fellow facility employees. Studies demonstrate that hospital employees have 9% higher healthcare costs with increased rates of obesity, depression and asthma that illustrates why there is a need for nutrition intervention. When dietitians are included in employee wellness programs, hospital staff has the opportunity to receive nutrition and health education. One dietetic intern, during a clinical rotation was included in a community hospital employee wellness program. The team included staff dietitians, the intern and the executive chef. The chef prepared a sample meal following the dietary guidelines the RDs and intern provided nutrition information, answered audience questions and encouraged participants to taste the prepared healthy food. The event was planned to have a moderate size audience to maximize individual contact with the nutrition team. The combination of a small nutrition education class and a cooking component provided staff with an enjoyable and helpful learning environment. Staff feedback was very positive; many of the staff members reported implementing healthier cooking techniques in their home. A second nutrition education and cooking class was held a month later. Many of the same staff members returned and brought, along other colleagues. Positive feedback was again noted demonstrating the role of the dietitian in hospital employee health programs is just as critical as their role as part of the medical team. Dietitians should strive to become the backbone of hospital employee wellness programs to enhance employee health and well-being.

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