



Lead By Example: Doctor's Orders

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Family Medicine
Sanford Health
Pelican Rapids



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Sanford Health in Pelican Rapids Adopts Healthy Lifestyle and Inspires Patients

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the potential for employers to promote workforce wellness is especially important given that there are 145 million workers in the US and 85 million people spend almost 8 hours per day functioning under the rules and regulations of their workplace.

Health care and healthy choices seem to go hand in hand. So, it would be surprising if health care settings did not intentionally promote wellness among their providers and staff, as well as their patients.

However, according to Rita Cowie, RN, Clinic Manager at Sanford Health in Pelican Rapids, "In the eleven years that I have worked at this clinic, temptation is found in the break room. There have been cakes, cookies and treats of all kinds continuously tempting the staff here. We receive these treats from patients, pharmaceutical representatives and our own staff."

The clinic had been partnering with PartnerSHIP 4 Health (PS4H) since 2009 in order to better address wellness within their patient population. So it made sense to connect with PS4H in 2012 to develop a worksite wellness plan in order to bring wellness to work. "With our new wellness systems in place, we have encouraged our staff to bring healthier items and so far, we have received positive feedback," states Cowie.

"We started off slowly by talking to the wellness committee about healthy habits. We then surveyed staff about their nutrition. Wellness at work evolved into a standing agenda item and is now a formal part of our monthly meetings with wellness objectives," said Cowie. PS4H has assisted the clinic in their wellness initiatives and has funded items such as a fruit strainer, apple slicer, smoothie machine and a bike rack.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC),

A positive wellness culture in the workplace contributes to the physical, mental, and emotional well-being of workers. The workplace becomes more productive and constructive when employers integrate breaks for rejuvenation. It also helps to establish clear and reasonable roles and responsibilities and respect the time and talents of individuals and their non-work demands. These steps provide the organization with more opportunity to reduce the number of sick days and health-associated costs.

Dr. Julie Spina, Family Medicine Provider at Sanford Health in Pelican Rapids, has taken the worksite wellness initiative seriously and has made some lifestyle changes resulting in significant weight loss. "I have lost 50 pounds so far. Many of my patients ask me how I did it. I used portion control, eating more frequently and exercising. It's a good thing to be able to talk to patients from my own experience."

Dr. Spina has also received training in the clinical skill of motivational interviewing through a four day workshop offered by PS4H. Motivational interviewing enables clinicians to have a patient-centered conversation that empowers patients to make lifestyle changes that lead to better health outcomes.

"This training has brought me into new conversations with patients. I feel much more comfortable talking to patients about making healthier choices to lose weight. They seem more comfortable to talk to me as well because they see that I have gone through the weight loss journey myself," said Spina.

"Our whole culture has changed here. Dr. Spina and other employees have lost weight. One of our employees has taken up running. We represent health care, so our clinic staff wants to lead this community towards health by showing a healthy example," added Cowie.

