

## QUALITY AND COST-EFFECTIVE CARE: A NURSING SOLUTION

<b>Title</b>	<b>OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH NURSES: A GOOD RETURN ON INVESTMENT</b>
<b>The Issue</b>	Injuries in the workplace affect employees' health and reduce productivity. The contribution of occupational health nurses in increasing employee awareness, preventing injuries and decreasing company costs and time lost due to work-related injuries, is often unrecognized.
<b>A Solution</b>	A system to measure the effectiveness of occupational health services.
<b>An Example</b>	The Telus corporate health program is driven by about 20 employees, of whom 50 per cent are occupational health nurses and 50 per cent are staff specializing in ergonomics, psychology, employee assistance counselling and clerical support. A tracking system was developed to measure the value of the company's occupational health services. System components included an on-site clinic for primary care, an on-site fitness centre, immunization programs and health promotion activities. The program objectives were linked directly to Telus's corporate strategic plan and business objectives.
<b>Results</b>	<p><b>EMPLOYEE-RELATED:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Access to a variety of health-related programs and services.</li><li>• Increased promotion of flu immunization by occupational health nurses resulted in a decrease in absences due to respiratory illnesses by 7.3 per cent between 1995-1998.</li><li>• The absenteeism rate among members of the employee fitness program is 28 per cent less than the company average.</li><li>• The operator service repetitive strain injury (RSI) intervention demonstrated a 57 per cent decrease in reported RSIs between 1992-1998.</li></ul> <p><b>ECONOMIC:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• In 1998, Telus's occupational health program showed savings of more than \$4.2 million. This represents a return on investment of \$4 for every dollar spent.</li><li>• Decreased absenteeism among employee fitness program members equates to an annual cost saving of approximately \$1,030,000. The fitness program successfully operates on a break-even basis.</li><li>• In 1998, the organization's primary care service produced an estimated productivity savings of \$508,000 by providing on-site assessment and treatment facilities.</li></ul>

Permission to reproduce is granted. Please acknowledge the Canadian Nurses Association.

Canadian Nurses Association, 50 Driveway, Ottawa, Ontario K2P 1E2  
Tel: (613) 237-2133 or 1-800-361-8404 Fax: (613) 237-3520  
Web site: [www.cna-nurses.ca](http://www.cna-nurses.ca) E-mail: [prr@cna-nurses.ca](mailto:prr@cna-nurses.ca)



- The 1998 pilot test of a Return to Work Program demonstrated an initial cost savings of \$98,000.
- The Employee Assistance Program provides internal counselling/assessment/referral to employees at approximately one-third the cost of the industry standard for external providers of similar services.
- Corporate health services generated \$92,000 in revenue from sales of stress management books, management workshops and fee-for-service activities in 1998.

*June 2000*

---

### **References:**

Who's Who in Healthcare: Profile of Sharon Blaney, Manager of Corporate Health Services at Telus. *Canadian Healthcare Manager*. October/November 1999, 43.

BCTEL Corporate Health Service 1999 Submission for the Canada Awards for Excellence: Healthy Workplace Award.

Telephone interview with Sharon Blaney, December 1999.