

30 April 2019

Media Release – Managing Workplace Stress Pays Dividends

From: NZ Register of Exercise Professionals



Managing Workplace Stress Pays Dividends

While the problem of workplace stress is not new, awareness of managing it, and the responsibility that employers play, has gained significant traction in recent years.

Under the Health and Safety at Work Act 2015 (HSWA), employers have an obligation to prevent and reduce work related harm to their staff. This includes the obvious things like safety around dangerous equipment, but also includes mental or physical ill health due to less measurable criteria such as workplace stress.

A recent study from the University of Northern Carolina found that half of American workplaces offer some sort of health and wellness programmes, with larger workplaces being stronger in more comprehensive employee programmes. This is a trend that NZ workplaces needs to get behind.

The 2017 Wellness in the Workplace Survey was undertaken by Southern Cross Health Society and BusinessNZ. This included over 100 private and public sector businesses, with their combined employees equalling approximately 5% of New Zealand's workforce. The survey revealed that stress levels, though moderate, were on the rise for the second consecutive time, with general workload being the main cause of anxiety.

While the term 'workplace stress' is not legally defined, it is accepted that it can be caused by a number of things, including:

- an unreasonable workload
- lack of health and safety precautions against hazards
- workplace bullying
- workplace restructuring
- a toxic work environment

One of the consistent messages around managing stress is the contribution physical activity can make. It doesn't help when a workplace is desk or office based, and there is little room for movement, which is one of our bodies ways of dealing with the hormone response caused by stress.

As most people are aware, exercise and lifestyle changes can play a huge role in managing stress levels. Adopting an effective programme and culture of exercise and activity can therefore result in a win/win situation for both employees and the business they work for, and it's not just about the way an office is set up.

The Ministry of Business Innovation and Employment (MBIE) is very clear when it comes to workplace stress and the need for workplaces to consider the impact on staff. Employers can face prosecution for a breach of obligations if they fail to adequately address workplace stress. With the research showing exercise contributes to stress management, and workplaces obligated to reduce stress, it makes sense that employers should encourage staff to get active.

One of the issues in workplace stress management is that while many employers can see the benefits, they have lacked the resources or incentive to take the step to get their team healthy.

Fortunately there is the Exercise New Zealand endorsed stress management programme for workplaces to improve the health, and reduce the stress levels of employees. The Stress Management Exercise Association Endorsed Programme (SMEAEP) requires exercise professionals to meet certain criteria which then allows them to offer the programme to businesses, and the cost is not subject to Fringe Benefit Tax (FBT).

For the workplace and stressed workforce this has a couple of key benefits; it reduces the cost of providing stress management, and it gives workplaces an assurance that money spent will give a programme implemented by qualified exercise professionals.

For more information, please go to <http://www.stressmanagementexercise.co.nz>

References:

<https://tinyurl.com/y583agat>

<https://tinyurl.com/y2gtst54>

<https://tinyurl.com/y68vun96>

Contact details for further information about the exercise industry:

NZ Register of Exercise Professionals, Registrar Stephen Gacsal

Email: stephen@reps.org.nz telephone: 0800 55 44 99 website: www.reps.org.nz

NZ Register of Exercise Professionals (REPs) - Independent not for profit quality mark of exercise professionals and facilities. Using REPs Registered Exercise Professionals is the “warrant of fitness check” that exercise professionals and facilities meet New Zealand and internationally benchmarked standards to deliver safe exercise advice and instruction. REPs is affiliated globally to other national exercise professional registers representing over 210,000 exercise professionals through the International Confederation of Registers for Exercise Professionals (ICREPs) - www.icreps.org

Exercise Association of New Zealand, Chief Executive Richard Beddie

Email: richard@exercisenz.org.nz, telephone: 0800 66 88 11 website:

<http://www.exercisenz.org.nz>

Exercise Association of New Zealand - Not for profit exercise industry representative organisation. Its *mission is to proactively support a sustainable exercise and fitness industry in New Zealand by growing participation in structured exercise through advocacy, information and industry standards.*

