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Quickly Treating Employee Depression Helps Workers

Depression takes a hefty toll on the U.S. workplace, affecting about 6% of employees each year while costing over \$30 billion annually in lost productivity, according to research conducted recently by Harvard University. In most cases, the symptoms of depression appear gradually and the usual process of treating depression -- taking stock of the situation, visiting one's personal care physician, obtaining a referral to a mental health professional and then finally receiving treatment -- can take months or years.

However, another recent study appearing in the September issue of the *Journal of the American Medical Association* (Vol. 298, No. 12) indicates that workers with "telephonic outreach" available, such as your 24-hour Employee Assistance Program, fare much better in accessing treatment and recovering, thus reducing lost time expenses for their employers. The NIMH-sponsored research was conducted by Dr. Phillip Wang who found that employees who obtained early and aggressive intervention experienced significantly less time away from work and significantly higher job retention than those who remained untreated or for whom diagnosis and referral were delayed. In fact, they missed two fewer work weeks per work year than the untreated group or those who took the slow, traditional route in search of relief.

Also, more workers in the early intervention group were still employed by year's end -- 93% vs. 88% -- resulting in further cost savings for employers who thus avoided the expense of rehiring and training replacement workers.

The research specifically concluded that employers who provided a "telephonic outreach and care management program," such as a professional Employee Assistance Program, realize a "financial value and positive return on investment" from their outreach initiatives.

The Mayo Clinic has isolated nine symptoms that can indicate the early stages of depression. (www.MayoClinic.com/health/depression/). If you find yourself falling into any of these patterns of behavior, please consider making a call to your Employee Assistance Program for confidential and caring assistance:

- Sleep disturbances including too much sleep, frequent awakenings and/or insomnia
- Impaired thinking or concentration at work or at home
- Significant changes in weight, either increases or decreases
- Agitation, including feelings of irritability and annoyance
- Chronic fatigue, or a feeling like you're doing everything in slow motion
- Low self-esteem, manifested by feelings of worthlessness or chronic guilt
- Thoughts of death, often triggered by a persistent negative view of yourself
- Increasing detachment from friends and family
- Increased use of drugs or alcohol to escape your pain

Depression can be effectively treated especially if it is diagnosed early. So remember that help is simply a phone call away! Your Employee Assistance professionals stand ready to discuss your situation in complete privacy to initiate the healing process immediately.