

OCTOBER 2004

Heel with Fido

With obesity on the rise, many wellness programs are promoting walking. It requires no equipment or training. And nearly everyone can safely walk and get adequate exercise.

Before you buy pedometers in bulk, have you thought about leashes?

Evidence shows that people who own a dog get many health benefits. They have lower blood pressure, better cardiovascular health, and may even live longer.

One study found that regardless of how severe the heart attack, patients who were dog owners were significantly less likely to die within 1 year of the attack.

People who have a dog get considerably more exercise than other people who do not have a dog. It's easy to let a treadmill gather dust, but a dog does not go away.

Just adopting a dog or cat improves health.

In the first month of having a pet, adults had fewer minor health problems. Ten months later, dog owners still had fewer health complaints than non-pet owners.

We came upon this idea in working with a client whose employees were middle-aged and who had arthritis and heart disease as cost drivers. Both of those illnesses respond well to physical activity: why not promote dogs as the ultimate walking companions? We contacted the local animal shelter and found that it offered free public education programs. They will visit the client's worksite and bring a veterinarian to talk (and walk!) with the dogs and their owners.

So, avoid the doghouse: Make your next wellness program innovative, science-proven, and targeted to your clients' health care costs and workforce. Think of Health Economy.

OTHER NEWS

Here is where we will be speaking in the next few months:

On October 26th, Massachusetts Association of Health Underwriters annual Benefest in Hopkinton.

On November 15th, Massachusetts Association for Independent Agents annual convention in Boston.

On March 16th, 2005, the local NAIFA chapter of Charleston, South Carolina.

On March 23rd, 2005, Maine NAIFA chapter's semi-annual continuing education fair.