

Stress takes its toll on workers

Employees are stretched thin as they deal with less pay and job security, more work and worry

MELANIE TURNER | STAFF WRITER

As more people worry about losing their jobs, not having enough money to pay their bills and their shrinking retirement accounts, companies are dealing with stressed-out employees.

And increased anxiety, according to psychologists, can make it more difficult for workers to do their best on the job. Stressed employees may have difficulty concentrating or making decisions, or may not get enough sleep. Their judgment is not as clear, and they may suffer from physical ailments such as stomach problems or headaches. Stress also can lead people to self-medicate by taking more prescription drugs or drinking more alcohol, for example.

"You just sort of feel lethargic," said consulting psychologist Phyllis Watts. "You can see how all of those things can end up impacting your ability to be seen as a good employee."

According to the Disability Management Employer Coalition, a San Diego-based nonprofit that educates employers on disability, absence, health and productivity, there's a business reason for paying attention to stress that results from overwork.

Last year, the DMEC convened a think tank to explore the causes and consequences of extreme productivity — a growing trend to push employees to work harder and

faster — hoping to raise awareness and give their members tools for keeping employees productive and happy.

The coalition found that employees increasingly are being pushed to the limits, and the resulting stress reduces productivity and profitability and increases health care costs.

"It had all of these side effects," said Marcia Carruthers, chief executive officer for the 3,000-member coalition.

At the same time, quality of life and health went down for individuals.

"You can push people too hard, and you're actually going to get less productivity, not more," Carruthers said.

According to the DMEC report, job stress costs the nation's businesses an estimated \$300 billion a year through absenteeism, diminished productivity, employee turnover, and medical, legal and insurance fees.

And while 48 percent of U.S. employers recognize that stress caused by working long hours affects performance, only 5 percent take steps to address it.

The coalition explored actions being taken by employers big and small to combat workplace stress.

Tips for managing work-related stress

- Identify community resources — such as financial counseling or child care — to help address concerns.
- Find an outside activity that involves positive, healthy interactions with people.
- Acknowledge the reality of the situation. Accept things as they are. Strive toward workable strategies.
- Seek advice from a trusted or admired peer on how to manage work and life demands.
- Eat right and exercise — even 10 minutes a day of exercise can be beneficial.
- Establish family mealtimes for better interaction.
- Develop healthy sleep habits.
- When you feel you're close to "hitting the wall," take steps to minimize stress. Take a break or shift your focus.

Source: Disability Management Employer Coalition

Union Pacific Railroad Co., for example, wanting to support employees dealing with work and life stress, established a behavioral health intervention initiative to educate employees about ways to cope with stress and improve their health and productivity.

"It's our hypothesis that a healthy employee is a more productive employee," said Denny Holland, director of occupational health psychology at Union Pacific.

Union Pacific is training its nurses to encourage employees who might exhibit signs of depression to get help.

Studies have shown that health affects employee safety, productivity and absenteeism, Holland said. A study conducted four years ago by the World Health Organization and Harvard University involved about 800 UP locomotive engineers. It found that depression is a factor in accidents and injuries, he said.

UP started out more than a decade ago researching how fatigue affects employees. Today, UP is conducting research supported by federal grants to take a broader look at health's impact on safety.

KEEP EMPLOYEES IN THE LOOP

The American Psychological Association conducted two online surveys of more than 2,500 people nationwide in April and September 2008 to get a measure about sources of stress.

The APA found that respondents' stress levels spiked in September. In April, 75 percent cited money, and 66 percent said the economy was a source of stress. In September, those numbers jumped to 81 percent and 80 percent, respectively.

Jan Allen, vice president of human resources for Staff Resources Inc. in Sacramento, said "absolutely," there's more on-the-job stress these days. "And mainly because of the reduction in the work force that adds to the remaining employees' responsibilities," she said.

The Chico-based company outsources human resources to legal, medical, manufacturing, construction and other

STRESS | PAGE 20

CHW's policy against genetically modified food has its hurdles

Lack of labeling requirements makes some products difficult to source

KATHY ROBERTSON | STAFF WRITER

When Catholic Healthcare West decided to raise the bar on genetically engineered and cloned-animal products in its hospital food supply, backers didn't realize how much heavy lifting was involved.

The policy, adopted in January, put the San Francisco-based health system in front of its peers and the market that serves them.

Wading in the weeds of controversy over what's safe, what's not, how to tell and what to do about it, the initiative has heightened awareness among vendors, sources say.

The lack of labeling laws poses a problem, though.

Even vendors who want to avoid these products may not know what's genetically engineered and what's not because the federal Food and Drug Administration has studied the products currently on the market, and decided they are safe and don't require labeling.

"It's a slow train moving," said Bob Juerjens, senior director of program development for Premier Inc., a group purchasing organization that serves more than 2,100 hospitals nationwide, including those affiliated with CHW.

"But (CHW) has really become a thought leader in this arena," Juerjens said. "They are the most vocal about wanting to know what's in our food and where it came from."

Neither Sutter Health nor the UC Davis Health System has made strides in this direction.

Kaiser Permanente does not have a formal policy but encourages vendors to support products grown locally, without synthetic pesticides or herbicides. The health

system also urges use of meat and dairy products from animals that haven't been given hormones or antibiotics, spokesman Edwin Garcia said.

NO CLONES

CHW announced in January that its food purchasing dollars will be focused on promoting sustainable food production practices, in part by seeking alternatives to genetically engineered sugar, as well as meat and dairy produced by animal clones.

The policy was developed out of concern that new technologies pose a threat to a healthy and sustainable food supply. Issues range from genetic contamination and increased pesticide use to animal cruelty and ethical and moral issues associated with these technologies.

"We recognize the interdependency between human health and the environment," said sister Mary Ellen Leciejewski, CHW's ecology program coordinator.

CHW is doing what it can to promote food production that is safe and healthy for patients, staff and visitors — and will sustain farmers and food producers in the communities the health system serves, Leciejewski said.

The policy came a year after the FDA investigated food from animal clones and concluded that meat and milk from cow, pig and goat clones and offspring of any animal clones, is as safe as food we eat every day.

Although the FDA studied and signed off on some varieties of genetically altered sugar beets as far back as 1998, farmers planted the first sugar beets prepared to withstand multiple applications of the weed killer glyphosate last year.

"We have numerous unanswered concerns about the imminent introduction of genetically engineered sugar beets and



Girlie Peterson, a food service worker at CHW's Mercy San Juan Medical Center in Carmichael, washes fresh produce that will be sold in the hospital's cafeteria. The hospital receives 40 pounds of locally grown fruit twice a week.

DENNIS MCCOY
SACRAMENTO BUSINESS JOURNAL

marketing from animal clones," Leciejewski said in prepared remarks when the policy was announced. "Previous genetically engineered crops have increased pesticide use and animal cloning is a cruel and unnecessary technology in meat and dairy

production," she said.

The health system has no cost estimates for the policy shift, though the products could carry the higher price tag that

FOOD | PAGE 21

FOOD | CHW and FDA remain at odds about the safety of genetically engineered food

FROM PAGE 19

organic food generally does today.

"We ask questions," said Pat Burdullis, administrator of nonclinical supply chain contacts at CHW. "We are heightening concern. It will eventually get there."

Affiliated hospitals are making changes to offer healthier food within existing budgets.

A nurse manager brings a "lug" — 40 pounds — of fresh fruit to the Mercy San Juan Medical Center cafeteria from a local orchard two times a week," said Karen Auwaerter, manager of nutrition and food services at the Carmichael hospital.

The cafeteria used to sell a total of 15 apples, oranges or bananas a day. It now sells about 80 fresh peaches, plums or nectarines.

FDA GIVES THE OK

In the United States, it is the manufacturer's responsibility to ensure a food product is legal and safe to eat.

A number of government departments, including the FDA, have enforcement authority. The agency offers a voluntary consultation to study the product and sign off on its safety.

"We believe all genetically modified organisms on the market now have been subject to consultation prior to market entry," said Jason Dietz, a science policy analyst with the Centers for Food Safety and Nutrition, which oversees biotechnology products. "They indicate the genetically altered varieties are as safe as the nonaltered varieties," Dietz said.

While genetic engineering involves altering, adding or deleting DNA, cloning is biological copying. It does not change the gene sequence.

In 2001, when it became clear that animal cloning might become a commercial venture, the FDA asked livestock producers and researchers to keep food from animal clones or their offspring out of the food supply.

Since then, the agency conducted an extensive evaluation of the safety of food from these animals and risk to animal health.

In January 2008, FDA scientists issued a report that concluded meat and milk from these animals is as safe to eat as food from conventionally bred animals.

Clones are similar to identical twins, but born at different times, said Larisa Rudenko, a senior adviser in the FDA's Center for Veterinary Medicine.

"Everybody has determined that food from these animals is safe and we need no further regulation. The offspring from any species is the same (genetically). There is no distinction there at all," Rudenko said.

Many people think livestock breeding is done by traditional mating, yet many farmers use artificial insemination, embryo transfer and in vitro fertilization. Cloning is simply a more advanced form of these techniques, Rudenko said.

The FDA does not require labeling of either cloned or genetically engineered products because scientists have concluded they are safe and not significantly different from other products in the food chain.

That leaves open the possibility of voluntary labeling to tout products that are not genetically engineered or that don't come from cloned animals.

"Anyone who wishes to label may label, so long as it is truthful and not misleading," Rudenko said.

VOLUNTARY MEASURES

Not everybody is convinced the products are safe.

Health Care Without Harm, a green advocacy organization in Duluth, Minn., still questions the safety of genetically engineered and cloned food products and

CATHOLIC HEALTHCARE WEST ASKS FOOD SUPPLIERS TO:

- Fully evaluate genetically engineered or cloned animal products through independent peer review for any effects on animal welfare, human health and the environment
- Label food with these products, including food from the offspring of clones
- Ensure separation of genetically engineered seeds and plants to prevent contamination
- Rigorously track cloned animals and their offspring throughout the food chain
- Hold genetic engineering patent owners liable for contamination of other crops

points out that some European countries have banned them or require labeling.

The American Medical Association

adopted a sustainable food policy at its annual meeting in June that promotes locally produced and organic foods, which generally means no genetic alteration.

CHW asked eight of its largest food suppliers for their policies on genetically engineered sugar beets, which are being planted for commercial use for the first time this year.

Results show suppliers prefer unaltered sugar beets, but only Diamond Crystal Brands Inc. said it intends to avoid buying genetically engineered sugar and that it will seek out suppliers that do not use foods with this ingredient.

Now, CHW is working with Health Care Without Harm and Premier to push action on the issue.

"The food chain is complex," Premier's Juerjens said. Some vendors who buy sugar sweeteners do so on the commodity market and don't know where the sugar beets were grown. "The big question is how you get everybody on the line and line them up."

Premier issued a set of standards July 13 for food supplies delivered to hospitals that includes labeling and ingredient traceability requirements, along with audits and inspections. Food suppliers who want a contract with Premier will have to comply.

"We just rolled it out," Juerjens said. "Some of their eyes got as big as saucers because we want to audit and do random samples — but everybody knows it's coming."

krobertson@bizjournals.com | 916-558-7869

When their future relies on your past...



McDonough's estate planning attorneys—
shaping innovative legal solutions to help
ensure your family's future is bright.



McDonough Holland & Allen PC
Attorneys at Law | Business | Construction | Health Care | Public Law | Real Estate | Litigation

Representative Estate Planning Services

Planning for Wealthy to Minimize Taxes

- Estate and Gift Taxes
- Income Taxes
- Property Taxes

Business Succession Planning

- Transition Management
- Preserve Family and Business Values

Estate Planning

- Trusts, Wills, Powers of Attorney
- Special Needs Trusts for Disabled
- Planning for Retirement Benefits

Sophisticated Wealth and Transfer Planning

- Creation and Management of Family Controlled Entities — Partnerships, LLCs, Corporations
- Trusts for Descendants
- Life Insurance Trusts
- Vacation Homes — Transfer and Continuity of Family Ownership
- Asset Protection Planning
- Pre and Post Marital Agreements

Charitable Planning

- Organization and Representation of Private Foundations and Charitable Trusts
- Conservation Easements

Estate and Trust Controversies

- Estate and Gift Tax Audits
- Trust and Estate Litigation

Post-Death Administration

- Trust and Probate Administration
- Advising Successor Trustees
- Estate Tax Return Preparation
- Tax Payment and Liquidity Strategies

McDonough has the largest Estate Planning/Probate team in the Sacramento region.