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New Study Shows American Cancer Society Program Helps Employers Implement Cost-Effective Chronic Disease Prevention Strategies

ATLANTA – June 13, 2008 – Newly published research conducted by the American Cancer Society and the University of Washington’s Health Promotion Research Center finds the Society’s Workplace Solutions consulting program to be successful in guiding employers to implement cost-effective chronic disease prevention strategies. The nonprofit Society considers the research validation of its unique ability to help employers control cost while improving access to affordable cancer prevention.

The study, “Employer Adoption of Evidence-based Chronic Disease Prevention,” appears in the July, 2008 issue of *Preventing Chronic Disease*, a publication of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

“Great progress is being made in the fight against cancer,” said Elmer E. Huerta, M.D., M.P.H., national volunteer president of the American Cancer Society. “Yet, 47 million uninsured and 25 million underinsured people in America lack access to quality health care. The American Cancer Society’s work with employers to help them maintain a culture that fosters a healthy lifestyle through policies and programs that lower the risk of cancer, detect the disease earlier, and provide access to high-quality treatment is critically important to our achieving our mission.”

Describing the goal of the study, co-author and Society product manager Jeff Cross said, “Historically, it’s been more difficult to prevent chronic diseases than to pay for them. Our goal is to make it easier for employers to prevent cancer and other chronic diseases in the workforce.”

The Society’s Workplace Solutions consulting program is designed around evidence-based public health practices, including recommendations from the U.S. Task Force on Community Preventive Services which have been scientifically evaluated and

shown to consistently improve key health behaviors including tobacco cessation, healthy eating habits, physical activity, and increased use of clinical preventive services such as cancer screening. The American Cancer Society works with corporate decision-makers to survey individual organizations' current practices, determine a set of relevant, tailored recommendations for employee populations, and then offer supporting data about cost-effectiveness and health impact to aid business decision-makers in prioritizing the recommendations and selecting implementation tactics that meet their unique situation.

Among the eight employers evaluated in the newly published study was JELD-WEN, a leading global manufacturer of windows and doors, based in Oregon. The data-centric JELD-WEN benefits team manages the benefits for the company's 150 divisions and 20,000 employees worldwide. Paul Kaiser, director of benefits, described how the service helped reaffirm their wellness priorities.

"The American Cancer Society has been an ideal partner for JELD-WEN," he said, "because it has brought a new perspective to corporate wellness issues and has provided us with the information and research we needed to take our wellness efforts to the next level."

Participating employers in the CDC study came from both the private and public sectors and ranged in workforce population size from 7,500 to more than 115,000 employees.

In its evaluation, the research team found, over a 13 month period, participating employers experienced a 68 percent increase in the number of evidence-based best health and wellness practices. The biggest improvements came from increased coverage for tobacco cessation treatment (31 percent) and for preventive cancer screenings (18 percent).

Asked about how the engagement influenced JELD-WEN's wellness initiatives, Kaiser said, "The credibility of the American Cancer Society and the information we received during the Society's engagement was instrumental in the decision to eliminate out-of-pocket expenses for mammography, in designing tobacco cessation support services and in promoting physical activity and weight control programs to our employees."

The American Cancer Society's nationwide Employer Initiative has as an objective the creation of meaningful, long-term relationships with employers of all sizes by aiding them through health and wellness (cancer prevention and early detection) and fundraising activities. The Society's Employer Initiative and its consulting services are significant contributors to the larger organization's ongoing commitment to increase access to quality health care.

"The American Cancer Society Employer Initiative centers on the mission match opportunity we have with employers – a common interest in maintaining a healthy workforce. The Society's Consulting service is a natural fit for us, because it helps our partners create lasting improvements in the health of the populations we serve by improving access to affordable, preventive care and encouraging supportive policies and programs to enable individuals to make healthy choices," said Joanne Pike, vice president of corporate initiatives for the Society.

For more information about the American Cancer Society Employer Initiative and Workplace Solutions programs, visit www.acsworkplacesolutions.com.

The American Cancer Society is dedicated to eliminating cancer as a major health problem by saving lives, diminishing suffering and preventing cancer through research, education, advocacy and service. Founded in 1913 and with national headquarters in Atlanta, the Society has 13 regional Divisions and local offices in 3,400 communities, involving millions of volunteers across the United States. For more information anytime, call toll free 1-800-ACS-2345 or visit www.cancer.org.

Study: Employer Adoption of Evidence-based Chronic Disease Prevention: A Pilot Study, Harris JR, Cross J, Hannon PA, Mahoney E, Ross-Viles S, Kuniyuki A.

Note: Media wishing to access the complete study, "Employer Adoption of Evidence-based Chronic Disease Prevention," may do so at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website. The study will be available on the *Preventing Chronic Diseases* page of the CDC website at: www.cdc.gov/pcd on Monday, June 16 at 12p.m. EDT.

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