**Employers' role in health and wellness to promote employee well-being**

**Johannesburg - In today's fast-paced work environment, where emotional health is as critical as physical health, employers are under increasing pressure to ensure their employees are well cared for, balanced, and content. This evolving focus is essential for maintaining a productive and positive workplace.**

Modern life has dramatically changed, and the rapid pace and high demands on individuals have increased mental, financial, and social challenges. As workloads increase, so does the need for environments that support optimal performance while prioritising personal well-being.

**Understanding well-being**

Well-being involves more than just physical health; it also encompasses mental and emotional health. Employers must invest in comprehensive wellness programmes that address all aspects of employee health to create a balanced work environment.

Holistic wellness programmes should address all aspects of well-being, including:

* Physical well-being: Maintaining a healthy body through exercise, proper nutrition, adequate sleep, and regular medical care.
* Mental well-being: Psychological health, which involves managing stress, having a positive outlook, and feeling capable of handling life's challenges.
* Emotional well-being: The ability to experience and express emotions healthily and have satisfying relationships and a support system.
* Social well-being: Developing and maintaining strong, positive relationships, belonging, and being part of a community.
* Financial well-being: Managing finances effectively to reduce stress and afford necessities and some luxuries.
* Occupational well-being: Finding fulfilment and purpose in one's work, having a work-life balance, and feeling accomplished.

**A commitment to wellness**

Critical components of strategies and initiatives that support the overall well-being of employees include:

* Health programmes: Implement programmes that promote physical health, such as gym memberships, fitness classes, on-site health screenings, and flu vaccinations.
* Mental health support: Provide resources for mental health, including access to counselling services, mental health days, stress management workshops, and employee assistance programs (EAPs).
* Flexible work arrangements: Offer flexible working hours, remote work options, and generous leave policies to help employees maintain a healthy work-life balance.
* Healthy work environment: Create a workplace that supports health and safety with ergonomic furniture, healthy food options, clean and well-ventilated spaces, and policies that prevent workplace harassment and discrimination.
* Financial well-being programmes: Provide financial education, retirement planning resources, and assistance programmes to help employees manage their finances and reduce financial stress.
* Professional development: Support career growth and job satisfaction through training programmes, career counselling, and opportunities for advancement.
* Community and Social Engagement: Encourage a sense of community through team-building activities, social events, volunteer opportunities, and employee resource groups.
* Recognition and rewards: Acknowledge and reward employees' contributions and achievements to foster a positive and motivating work environment.
* Inclusive policies: Develop and enforce policies that promote diversity, equity, and inclusion, ensuring all employees feel valued and respected.
* Regular feedback and communication: Maintain open lines of communication where employees can provide feedback and feel heard, as well as keep them informed about wellness initiatives and available resources.

**Examples of successful wellness programmes**

Globally, many companies have embraced the importance of employee wellness, resulting in increased productivity, morale, attendance, and reduced healthcare costs. Companies like Google, Microsoft, Apple, and Amazon have become renowned for their comprehensive wellness programmes that typically include access to mental health apps, educational reimbursements, support groups, fitness centres, on-site meals, and at-home wellness classes.

In South Africa, Medshield Medical Scheme has been certified as a Top Employer for its investment in world-class people practices. The Scheme is committed to a member-centric service model built on the health and wellness of its members and employees. This Top Employer certification highlights Medshield's dedication to maintaining exemplary people practices and initiatives that meet and exceed global benchmarks while delivering exemplary service to the Medshield Medical Scheme members.

The Scheme is at the forefront of promoting employee wellness through its extensive corporate medical scheme packages. These packages ensure employees can access medical care whenever needed and encourage proactive health management through preventative tests and procedures. The Medshield Wellness Benefit, available to all members on all benefit options, includes regular Health Risk Assessments (HRA) covering cholesterol, blood glucose, blood pressure, and body mass index (BMI) tests, which can be conveniently obtained from pharmacies.

Medshield also organises Corporate Wellness Days at participating employer groups. These Corporate Wellness Days are designed to identify potential health issues early and monitor employee health proactively, preventing conditions from becoming chronic. This proactive approach is essential for maintaining a healthy workforce and ensuring business success. In addition, employees who are members of Medshield can also benefit from ClickFit (www.ClickFit.co.za). This free online portal, exclusively available to members, is packed with free downloadable, easy-to-follow menus and workout programmes that will help get them moving and achieving their fitness and health goals.

As understanding employee wellness as a critical component of organisational success becomes more prevalent, investing in holistic wellness programmes is no longer optional but essential. By integrating wellness practices into their organisational culture, companies can pursue a comprehensive approach to health and wellness, demonstrating how proactive care and supportive environments can lead to healthier, happier, and more productive employees, setting a benchmark for other companies to follow.

**FIN**

(826 words)

**EDITORS NOTES**

**FURTHER MEDIA INFORMATION AND INTERVIEW REQUESTS**

* Stone issues this release on behalf of the Medshield Medical Scheme.
* For media enquiries or interview requests, please contact Willem Eksteen, CEO of Stone or a media liaison member of the Stone team at media@stone.consulting / 011 447 0168
* Alternatively, contact Lilané Swanepoel at Medshield at 010 597 4982 / lilanes@medshield.co.za

**MORE INFORMATION ON THE 2024 MEDSHIELD BENEFIT OPTIONS AND CONTRIBUTIONS**

Benefits and Contribution amendments are subject to CMS approval.

Please refer to the 2024 Product Page on the Medshield website at <https://medshield.co.za/>. You can review the benefit adjustments and value adds and download the 2024 benefit guides

* **PremiumPlus** provides mature families and professionals with unlimited hospital cover in a hospital of their choice, with In-Hospital Medical Practitioner consultations and visits paid at 200% Medshield Private Tariff, and the freedom to manage daily healthcare expenses through a comprehensive Personal Savings Account and extended Above Threshold Cover.
* **MediBonus** provides mature families and professionals with unlimited hospital cover in a hospital of their choice, with In-Hospital Medical Practitioner consultations and visits paid at 200% Medshield Private Tariff, and the independence to manage daily healthcare expenses through a substantial Day-to-Day Limit.
* **MediSaver** is perfect for independent individuals and young professionals thinking about expanding their families. MediSaver offers unlimited hospital cover in the Compact Hospital Network, with the freedom to manage daily healthcare expenses through a generous Personal Savings Account.
* **MediPlus** provides middle to upper-income families with complete healthcare cover for major medical and daily healthcare needs. Unlimited hospital cover is provided through a choice of two hospital networks, Prime or the value-focused Compact Hospital Network. Daily healthcare expenses are covered through a generous Day-to-Day Limit. Benefits are identical in both categories, Prime and Compact, with care coordination and doctor referral mandated on MediPlus Compact.
* **MediCore** is ideal for healthy individuals looking for comprehensive hospital cover, with daily healthcare expenses self-managed. This option offers unlimited hospital cover in the Compact Hospital Network, with In-Hospital Medical Practitioner consultations and visits paid at Medshield Private Tariff 200%. Day-to-day healthcare expenses are self-funded.
* **MediValue - Prime and Compact** - is the ideal option for growing families. It offers affordable cover for major medical and daily healthcare needs. Unlimited hospital cover is provided through a choice of two hospital networks, Prime or the value-focused Compact Hospital Network. Daily healthcare expenses are covered through a sizeable Day-to-Day Limit. Benefits are identical on both options, MediValue Prime and MediValue Compact, with care coordination and doctor referral mandated on MediValue Compact.
* **MediSwift** is the ideal hospital plan for active, healthy individuals. Major medical emergency and In-Hospital treatment are covered up to R1 million per family in the Compact Hospital Network, with the added benefit of day-to-day treatment for non-professional sports injuries. As a hospital plan, MediSwift offers no Day-to-Day benefits, allowing members the freedom to self-manage their daily healthcare expenses.

**Medshield Medical Scheme - Live Assured knowing you have a Partner for Life.**

**ABOUT MEDSHIELD MEDICAL SCHEME**

* Medshield is a healthcare fund where all members contribute towards the fund monthly to cater for medical cover should the need arise.
* Medshield has been in operation since 1968, making us one of the most experienced, knowledgeable, and reliable medical schemes in South Africa. Our extensive experience in the healthcare sector guides our understanding of our members' needs. Our excellent cover and benefits combined with the best quality systems and services have resulted in our exceptional size and strength.
* Each of our options offers affordably priced benefits. We continuously review and improve the range of benefits in each option to bring you what you need.
* Our impeccable reputation of prompt payments to hospitals, doctors, pharmacies and other medical caregivers guarantees approval from service providers when you present your Medshield membership card.
* Our extensive partner networks place us in the perfect position to offer exceptionally competitive rates to our members.
* Medshield is well-represented throughout all nine provinces and provides seamless access to service providers in your area. Our geographical spread provides convenience if it becomes necessary for you to have a personal discussion with one of our experienced consultants. We also have a streamlined online claim submission system and immediate contact centre assistance, making it easier to manage your membership and claims from the convenience of your home or office.
* Our extensive range of additional benefits and services is another distinguishing factor. Our benefits and services have been designed to give members additional support when they need it most, for instance, in an emergency or when suffering from a chronic or life-threatening condition.
* Compared with other medical schemes, our trustworthiness, impeccable history, and exceptional service guarantee that we come out tops!