

Press release

Scientific knowledge saves costs and boosts productivity

In times of financial crisis companies can reduce costs and improve productivity using scientifically acquired knowledge. Starting May 2009, VU University Medical Centre participates in a new occupational health (OH) company, Evalua Nederland BV, to increase efficacy and efficiency of OH interventions.

The mission of VUmc includes contributing to high quality OH care and knowledge transfer, based on scientific research. This knowledge will enable companies in reducing costs while simultaneously increasing productivity. From the Department of Public and Occupational Health of VU University Medical Center (VUmc) occupational physicians dr. Han Anema and prof. Willem van Mechelen, and occupational epidemiologist prof. Allard van der Beek are involved in Evalua Nederland BV (www.evalua.nl). They work closely together with their Finnish counterpart Evalua International Ltd. (www.evalua.fi).

The new company Evalua Nederland BV will mainly focus on large companies (500+ employees), OH Services ('arbodiensten') and income insurers. The collaboration with Evalua International enables VUmc to connect its competence on lifestyle interventions and return-to-work programs with the latest Finnish expertise dealing with work-life balance (work ability). In this respect Evalua Nederland BV will mitigate the effects of the economic crisis which Dutch companies encounter at this moment by helping them to achieve high quality OH care ('arbozorg') with a high return-on-investment. In the longer term the goals are directed at mitigating the effects of aging and delayed retirement age, and lifestyle-related health and vitality issues.

Sante Health Survey

Evalua International Ltd. was founded in 2002 by the Finnish physician and scientist Dr. Simo Taimela. Dr. Taimela is director of Evalua International and also holds a position as adjunct professor in epidemiology at the University of Helsinki. Evalua offers evidence-based expert services dealing with OH to increase the health, vitality, fitness and work ability of employees. For this purpose a validated questionnaire (Sante Health Survey) is used, and offered through the Internet or in a traditional pencil and paper manner. Based on the responses, a profile of employees is created resulting in advice for targeted actions by the OH Services. This advice is aimed at the individual, as well as groups of workers.

Scientific research showed that the application of the Sante Health Survey has led to a reduction of 11 days of sickness absence per employee per year in a high-risk group. This had a significant cost savings as a result. The return on investment was more than € 10 for each Euro invested. Furthermore, the extensive database of Evalua International offers the possibility for benchmarking at an international level. In Finland the services of Evalua satisfy a number of multinationals, such as Nokia, Nokia Siemens Networks, Finnair, Wärtsilä, Metso and Ilmarinen (a pension insurance company).

Note for the editor:

For more information, please contact the communications department of the VU University Medical Center, Jan Spee +31 (0)20 444 3444, fax +31 (0)20 444 3450. All VU University Medical Center press releases are available at www.VUmc.nl/voorjournalisten.

Background information (not for publication)

VU University Medical Center's core business consists of patient care, scientific research, and education. Its pivotal points in care and research are cancer and immunity, the brain, movement, vital functions and extramural care. Each year 38,000 patients are admitted (including one-day admissions), well over 300,000 patients visit the Outpatients department and 40,000 arrive at the Accident and Emergency department. Approximately 2,000 medical students are in training here. Each year, VU University Medical Center produces around 2,000 scientific publications and reports based on the scientific research carried out here. This includes the results of thesis research projects being carried out by 100 PhD students.

VU University Medical Center is a member of the Dutch Federation of University Medical Centers (NFU). The NFU is a collaborative venture of the eight university medical centers (UMCs) in the Netherlands. Its overall objective is to promote the common interests of the UMCs. The other members of the NFU are the AMC (Academic Medical Center in Amsterdam), azM (University Hospital Maastricht), Erasmus MC (University Medical Center Rotterdam), LUMC (Leiden University Medical Center), UMCG (University Medical Center Groningen), UMC Utrecht (University Medical Center Utrecht) and UMC St Radboud (Radboud University Nijmegen Medical Center). A total of 60,000 staff are employed by the eight UMCs.