

*Evaluating CHIP*

# Impact of CHIP on Corporate Health

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Six corporations in Rockford that became guinea pigs last year in hopes of lowering their medical costs have seen improvements in workers' health, according to a new study.

## Clinical Improvements

Employees who took part in the Coronary Health Improvement Project (CHIP) had significant short-term health improvements. Coronary risk factors such as body fat, weight, cholesterol, triglycerides, blood sugar and blood pressure were tested before and after the eight-week program. Bottom line: participants were healthier than when they started. Men made greater improvements than women. And people with the biggest health problems saw the most change.

## Evaluation Team

An independent research team from Brigham Young University, headed by highly respected Professor Steve Aldana, investigated and analyzed the clinical data collected at six corporate sites in Rockford where the CHIP program had been conducted.

"This CHIP data is the best I've ever seen, and I've seen a lot," he said at a press conference. "Even though our numbers are relatively few and we are pioneers, this data is inspiring. To think that we can make a big difference in people's lives is most rewarding."

The average person lost 9 lbs, dropped cho-

lesterol levels by 17% and reduced the body mass index by 1.4 points. On the whole, men lost 4 lbs more than women and dropped 35 cholesterol points compared with 21 for women.

At the end of the program, there were 15% fewer obese people than at the beginning.

Dangerously high blood pressures were lowered to a level equal to that of 2 to 3 medications.

"This lifestyle is a very powerful drug," Aldana said. The results will be presented to health experts next month at the *American Journal of Health Promotion* Conference at Lake Tahoe. They will then be submitted to medical journals.

*"These clinical improvements are the best I have seen in any corporate wellness program."*

—Steve Aldana, PhD

*Continued on page 28*

## Evaluating CHIP

*Continued from page 27*

### CHIP Description

CHIP is a 40-hour, educational program that encourages men and women to adopt lifestyle changes that reduce the risk of—or even reverse—heart disease,

hypertension and diabetes.

It provides support for participants to maintain healthier lifestyles.

After the intensive part is concluded, the training is continued through monthly alumni meetings.

Throughout the corporate CHIP program, 470 people in this study watched instructional videos twice a week for two months featuring Dr. Hans Diehl, an epidemiologist from the Lifestyle Medicine Institute headquartered in Loma Linda, California. A trained facilitator taught diet and exercise modification.

*“Many aspects of health improved for workers in the CHIP program.”*

### Corporate Voices

Dr. Mark Dargene, Corporate Wellness director at the Woodward Governor Corporation in Rockford, said, “The study’s results reflect the changes that we have seen in our own employees. It wasn’t surprising, but it was good to see that other Rockford corporations where the program is being conducted had similar results,” he said.

The program has decreased sick days at Rockford Products, and the company is studying whether its medical costs are going down as well.

“We know that these people feel better,” said Richard Mowris, vice president of administration. “Now, is there an impact on costs?”

CHIP consultant, Peter Vedro, said the program will undoubtedly have an economic benefit, especially for self-insured corporations where people will participate in sharing their own medical costs.

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