

Improving The Health Of Millions Through The Global Chief Medical Officer Network

We recently announced the launch of the first ever global Chief Medical Officer Network, a group of world-leading clinicians committed to bringing about a lasting improvement to the world's health.

Experts in behaviour change, the network is steered by Bupa and is a unique collaboration of Chief Medical Officers from a range of industries as diverse as automotive, tech, and soft drinks. The network was formed to combine their insight, experience and global reach in order to tackle the biggest health challenges in the world through driving behaviour change – and more specifically, behaviour change within the workplace. Collectively, the network has the responsibility of a workforce of over five million people, the equivalent of the population of New Zealand.

The workplace presents a huge opportunity for improving the world's health. With almost half of the world's population in work, it's a natural avenue for helping people to be healthier in their everyday lives. However, it's easy to talk about health improvement, but very hard to do. All too often we just tell people what they need to do, sometimes with a large investment but with very little impact.

One of the chief drivers of the CMO Network is behaviour change – we know that telling people what to do doesn't work, so how do you change behaviour? This is a world of subtle influence: a world that advertising agencies have inhabited for many years, yet an area healthcare has almost apologetically approached. For if we are to change behaviours, we need to learn the skills of marketers.

As a network, we've agreed upon some core areas of initial action. Our first area of focus will be on the development of key standards for wellness in the workplace: what does a healthy workplace look like? This is not a new path to tread: a great deal has been written on the topic already, but we see our role as reinforcing global health standards which have been determined by organisations such as our partners, the World Heart Federation.

It's a well known, but often forgotten fact, that the things that make us healthy are largely lifestyle choices (40%), then what we call the 'social determinants' of health, such as education (30%), genetics (20%) and finally healthcare treatment – a tiny 10%. Yet globally, governments and organisations focus most of their attention on healthcare systems and treatments – completely ignoring the other 90%.

With this lens as our first call to action, we decided that our initial focus area would be on smoking. We agreed that the businesses in the network would align around smoke-free workplaces across all of our organisations globally. This is not without significant challenge for many organisations: however, it's a fundamental first step to improving the health of the world.

Next, we agreed to take action on movement. This means two things - firstly the recognition that exercise has great health benefits, but also that sedentary lifestyles are an independent risk factor for many diseases. In fact, if you exercise but spend all day sitting down in the office, the benefits slowly become redundant. Another action, therefore, was to set up a global movement challenge between all the global CMO Network organisations. Healthy competition is a great motivator for behaviour change, so watch this space for details of a global corporate exercise challenge.

At Bupa, being healthy includes both body and mind – so we also agreed to focus on an area we call positive energy. This includes psychological wellbeing, sleep and mental health. We all agreed this is a huge issue across many organisations, and sometimes it's one that is hardly ever discussed. The interventions in this area were less clear and to an extent are personal to the individual, but some techniques we discussed included the articulation of a personal purpose, volunteering, and tactics such as meditation. We therefore decided that we would pilot some of these in willing organisations looking at how we can use behavioural change techniques from our research.

Finally, we agreed it was important that we focus on diet. Again, many behavioural

change techniques have been tried already, to mixed effect. This area requires further testing and experimentation within willing organisations in our network, so we'll aim to define a strategy for intervention in the future which we feel really causes behaviour change.

The global CMO Network is a world first and offers us a unique opportunity to make a real difference to the world's health via workplaces. Working alongside other organisations, civil society players, governments and UN agencies, we can significantly affect behaviour change through our recommendations on workplace wellbeing and ultimately, public and community health.

At Bupa, we are driven by our commitment to being a purposeful business, and our belief that the private sector has a responsibility to contribute to the health of the world.

To read more about the network and gain insight from our 32 global behaviour change experts, visit Bupa.com: www.bupa.com/ourvision/tackling-the-toughest-challenges-in-healthcare/workplace-health/the-cmo-network/.



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