

Step Up to the CEO Cancer Gold Standard

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The Gold Standard: It is a perfect name for a program I am thrilled to bring to your attention. Several close relatives and friends of mine have survived or lost their battles with cancer, and it's safe to say most readers can say the same or have undergone treatment themselves.

The CEO Cancer Gold Standard focuses on five critical areas that help accredited organizations maintain a culture encouraging healthy lifestyles and providing support when a cancer diagnosis is made. The Five Pillars are Tobacco Use, Diet & Nutrition, Physical Activity, Screening & Early Detection, and Access to Quality Treatment and Clinical Trials. "It has been developed over the past four years and is now ready for promulgation, and use, and embrace, hopefully, by corporate America, as well as, by nonprofits," Dr. Martin Murphy, convener of the nonprofit [*CEO Roundtable on Cancer*](#), told me in a phone interview. "Fifty percent of all men personally will be diagnosed with that disease, and just about one in three about 37 percent of all women will hear that same diagnosis from their physicians." Cancer's greatest death rate coincides with our wage-bearing years, so its workplace impact is enormous, he said, "Maybe it's surprising that companies have not really focused on the impact of cancer long before."

Six employers announced their Gold Standard accreditation in April 2006; about 20 other companies are working toward it. When all roundtable members achieve accreditation, it will be a milestone for workplace health: The employees, their spouses, and their dependents will total about 30 million Americans. "I would submit that it's going to have an impact far beyond malignancy," Murphy said. It's going to have a huge impact on such chronic diseases as diabetes, the scourge of obesity, on cardiovascular disease and stroke, as well. It's going to have halo effects on many catastrophic diseases, although we're focusing, understandably so, on cancer.

"This is not just good because it's going to reduce the death and suffering from cancer which it will in time," he added, "but because this breeds a corporate culture of wellness. It's not simply another benefit that's going to be added to your package of benefits."

I urge you to copy the accreditation application and the [Readiness Assessment](#). Please take them to your HR director or CEO and lobby for your company to take up this challenge.