

# Wellness Conquers Cancer

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One by one, large Triangle employers are starting to urge their employees to eat more broccoli, start exercising and stop smoking.

It's all part of the CEO Cancer Gold Standard™, a coordinated initiative corporate America has launched against cancer. Last year the disease cost the U.S. health care system about \$210 billion, according to the National Institutes of Health. Quintiles Transnational is the latest local company trying to fulfill the rigorous requirements to receive Gold Standard accreditation. SAS, the Cary software company, is another.

During a three-day health fair that concludes today, Quintiles' first 450 employees are expected to complete an initial risk assessment that is part of the Durham pharmaceutical services company's new, multimillion-dollar wellness plan. "We're a health-care company," said Dr. Oren Cohen, Quintiles' chief medical officer. "It's time to wake up and smell the coffee." Cohen, who was in line for a chair massage before doing his risk assessment, projected that Quintiles will spend \$1 million on the employee wellness program the first year alone. The plan is to offer the program to all of the company's 16,000 employees worldwide over the next five years.

"It's a significant investment," Cohen said. But he pointed out that a healthier lifestyle not only prevents cancer but also promises to reduce the risk for other diseases, such as diabetes and heart disease. "It's worth every new case of diabetes, cancer and heart disease we can prevent," Cohen said. "Those are enormous costs."

The CEO Cancer Gold Standard is the brainchild of a group of CEOs from diverse industries brought together by Bob Ingram, GlaxoSmithKline's vice chairman and a Triangle business leader. Former President George Bush tapped Ingram for the task. The initiative goes well beyond the typical corporate wellness program. Employers must prohibit tobacco use indoors and outside their buildings. Health benefit plans must offer employees free cancer screenings as well as free medication and counseling to stop smoking. Employees must have access to cancer treatment centers and tests of experimental cancer drugs. And comprehensive programs must be in place to help employees improve their diet, encourage physical activity and reduce stress. All cancers involve the malfunctioning of genes that control cell growth and division, according to the American Cancer Society. The malfunction can be caused by hormones, chemicals, tobacco and sunlight. At Wednesday's screening, Brandon McGuire, a Quintiles employee who recruits patients for drug tests, stuck his head into a machine that showed skin damage from sunlight. After seeing the results, the former lifeguard said he would make an appointment with a dermatologist.

McGuire, 35, signed up for the health fair mainly for the prostate cancer screen, a test that is usually recommended for men 50 and older. Quintiles offers it to all male employees regardless of age. "I just wanted to make sure," McGuire said.

Randall Blanco, a senior IT project manager at Quintiles, understands. A year ago, Blanco was diagnosed with prostate cancer after he went to his physician for a physical and a technician ran the test by mistake. He was 39.

"I feel very lucky," he said.

The wellness program also offers employees access to registered dietitians and personal trainers. At the health

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fair, Jessica Ganzer, a registered dietitian, explained proper portions. "Use your hand," Ganzer said. "One serving fits in the palm of your hand."

According to the American Cancer Society, about one-third of cancer deaths this year will be related to nutrition, lack of physical activity and obesity. Beverly Elliott, 49, a Quintiles customer service representative, is struggling to lose weight and lower her risk of developing diabetes. She appreciated her employer's effort to help her. "What the company is doing is putting information at our fingertips," Elliott said. "It shows us that they value us."

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### GOING FOR THE GOLD GLAXOSMITHKLINE

GlaxoSmithKline, which has a U.S. headquarters in Research Triangle Park, was one of the first six companies to be accredited through the CEO Cancer Gold Standard program. GSK's wellness programs include nutrition labeling in the cafeteria, full coverage of prescription or over-the-counter tobacco cessation drugs and on-site health screenings.

Through GSK's Quick Fit program, employees can learn a 15-minute workout to squeeze into a busy day. The company will also reimburse workers \$100 each year for healthy investments such as gym or Weight Watchers' memberships.

### SAS

Cary-based SAS is one of eight companies applying for CEO Cancer Gold Standard accreditation. Its programs include an on-site health-care center, a fully-equipped fitness center and three approaches to help workers stop using tobacco.

SAS' health-care center provides flu shots, regular physical exams that emphasize preventive care and early risk identification for heart disease, cancer and stroke. The company also labels healthy choices in its cafeteria