TELUS Healthy Living

Empowering TELUS team members to live healthier lives

Submission to the Conversation on Health
September 2007

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Introduction

TELUS is grateful for this opportunity to provide this submission to the Conversation on Health. The Conversation on Health is a valuable and important process to consider new ideas and innovations to help improve health services and outcomes in British Columbia.

TELUS has put in place a number of initiatives to help improve the health and well-being of our team members. We are detailing key aspects of our Healthy Living program, in the hope that it will provide examples of how employers and organizations can be engaged in contributing to the province’s goal of addressing pressures in the health care system through improved wellness and disease-prevention.

TELUS’ Healthy Living program features a variety of support services for our team members, targeting both physical and mental well-being.

TELUS recently launched a health screening program called Know Your Numbers, focused primarily on screening for key risk factors for heart disease.

The findings have been enlightening, and are helping us to shape our Healthy Living program. A significant number of those screened – 39% – had at least three or more risk factors for heart disease.

The data, and resulting implications, enable us to take a more strategic approach to our overall Healthy Living program. We have an opportunity to gear support services to help team members reduce their likelihood of developing heart disease and other related chronic diseases such as diabetes.

TELUS’ approach is not to mandate action, but rather to empower our team members to act. We empower team members by educating them about their own health status through Know Your Numbers, and providing them with access to health advice and support programs.

By empowering team members to take action, we may be able to alter the course of these individuals’ lives and reduce their risk of developing heart disease. Not only would this help our team members live healthier, happier lives and increase productivity, it would reduce future pressures and costs for the health care system.

This submission focuses primarily on the Know Your Numbers screening program, and describes related health support programs at TELUS and the positive impact we expect these programs to have on the overall health of participating team members.
About TELUS

TELUS is a leading national telecommunications company in Canada, with $8.7 billion in annual revenue and 10.7 million customer connections including 5.1 million wireless subscribers, 4.5 million wireline network access lines and 1.1 million Internet subscribers. TELUS provides a wide range of communications products and services including data, Internet protocol (IP), voice, entertainment and video.

Committed to being Canada’s premier corporate citizen, TELUS has contributed more than $76 million to charitable and non-profit organizations over the last six years, and has established seven TELUS Community Boards across Canada to lead its local philanthropic initiatives.

In 2006, TELUS invested more than $5.7 million in community initiatives in BC. We’re making a difference in the quality of life for British Columbians by supporting community building initiatives such as TELUS Tour for the Cure, TELUS Red Cross Call Centre and Arts Umbrella. TELUS team members and alumni contributed more than 199,800 hours of community service to charitable organizations in BC in 2006.

Being a good employer is essential to being a responsible corporate citizen. TELUS believes that in order to grow together as a company we must foster a workplace environment that differentiates us from our competitors. Through a diverse and respectful workplace, a safe and healthy work environment, competitive rewards and flexible work options, TELUS is working to attract and retain the talented people and leaders we need to be successful.

Proudly headquartered in BC, TELUS employs more than 8,600 highly skilled workers across the province, with an annual payroll in excess of $518 million. In 2006, TELUS paid more than $69 million in property and business taxes in BC, as well as collected and remitted $126 million in provincial sales tax. Our team members in BC earn an average hourly wage of $33.36, with an average annual compensation of more than $57,000 plus variable pay.

800 new jobs will be created in BC and Alberta over the next three years to support new services such as TELUS TV. 2,000 skilled technical positions will be required in BC and Alberta over the next three years to replace retiring employees.

Like most employers, the impact of demographic change and growing skills shortage means that we need to both increase productivity, as well as make TELUS an attractive place to work. Our Healthy Living program is helping us achieve both of those goals.
Health Screening through Know Your Numbers

It's difficult to do something about a problem you don’t even know you have. That's why TELUS has developed a new personal health screening program for our team members.

Know Your Numbers is focused on screening for potential risk factors for heart disease, since heart disease is a precursor condition to many other prevalent chronic diseases including diabetes.

This program is completely confidential, and delivered by Shepell FGI, a national Employee and Family Assistance Provider which provides counseling and support to our team members through our Employee and Family Assistance Program.

The program measures:

- height & weight for Body Mass Index (BMI)
- abdominal girth measurement

A Registered Nurse will also test:

- blood pressure
- cholesterol
- glucose levels

High blood pressure is a strong indicator for heart conditions. With no outward symptoms, it’s often referred to as the “silent killer”.

Risk or presence of diabetes can be determined, in part, by blood glucose screening. If left untreated or improperly managed, diabetes can result in a variety of complications, including: heart disease, kidney disease, eye disease, and nerve damage.

The health screening through Know Your Numbers helps determine our team members’ risk of developing Cardiovascular Disease in the next 10 years.

Medical professionals are available at these sessions to discuss individual results, and assist in developing appropriate health and wellness plans. Team members who are interested in a more thorough screening of blood cholesterol and blood glucose are advised to see their family doctor.
Participation Levels

In 2006, we screened approximately 1,000 team members in BC and Alberta and anticipate screening at least 1,000 additional team members in BC and AB in 2007. We will also expand the program this year to include approximately 1,000 team members in Ontario and Quebec, thereby doubling the number of participants in the program.

Participation in the screening program is voluntary, with all team members encouraged to participate to achieve optimal health. To ensure we maximize participation rates, we focus on bringing the screening program to the buildings with the largest team member populations first. Our ultimate goal is to have all team members screened at least once in the Know Your Numbers Program.

Following initial screening, participants have opportunities for subsequent screenings. Those with minimal risk factors for heart disease can be screened on a less frequent basis, such as once every couple of years. However, those with more problematic results have access to a variety of support programs and tools (described further below), as well as annual retesting.

Preliminary Program Results

The results of this program reveal a significant number of team members with multiple risk factors for heart disease. Of particular concern was the fact that the 2006 test group contained younger team members who are already exhibiting risk factors for heart disease. Addressing these issues now may prevent these young team members from developing multiple chronic conditions by the time they reach middle age. This life-altering course correction could not only improve their health and quality of life in the future, it could significantly reduce costs to the health system over their lifetime.

In June 2006, 464 team members participated in a pilot program, in which each participant was assessed on blood pressure, cholesterol, BMI, glucose, smoking and activity levels. The results were enlightening:

Heart Disease Risk
- 65% had a moderate to high risk for Total Cholesterol to HDL Ratio identifying cardiac risk
- 34% at high risk
- 24.2% of the 20-29 age group had this risk factor
- national average rate is 15% of population

Activity Levels
- 50% of employees are not active
Diabetes
- 5% have elevated glucose levels

Age Risk
- 62.2% of pilot group are 40 years plus

Body Mass Index (BMI)
- 24% have high BMI

Table 1: Risk Factors

- Total Cholesterol (TC): 34%
- Exercise: 50%
- Abdominal Girth: 2%
- BMI: 24%
- TC : HDL: 65%
- HDL: 25%
- Smoking: 4%
- Glucose: 5%
- Blood Pressure: 20%

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Implications of Screening Results

These results have significant implications for our team members. It is estimated that 36% of deaths in Canada are caused by heart disease and stroke. Combined, they are the number one cause for hospitalization in Canada.

80% of people with diabetes will die as a result of heart attack or stroke. The direct costs associated with diabetes range from $1000 to $15,000 per year. This condition can be prevented by healthy eating, weight loss, not smoking and reducing stress. The risk of developing diabetes can be cut up to 58% by exercising moderately 30 minutes per day and loosing 5-7% of body fat.

As a result of these initial findings, we are refining our wellness programs and are in the process of retesting this initial test group to support their efforts to maintain a healthy heart. This means addressing key risk factors including: nutrition, physical exercise, stress, and work-life balance through supportive services such as individual counseling, fitness programs and nutritional advice.

While many of our health and wellness programs pre-date the Know Your Numbers program, the screening results provide a focus and connectivity towards the desired outcome of reducing the risk of heart disease. This is allowing us to be much more strategic about our Healthy Living program with measurable outcomes for success.

We believe that someone who is supported through this change is more likely to have the will and commitment to make the lifestyle changes that will make a positive difference in their health status.
Supporting health programs

Manage Your Numbers

TELUS has introduced a companion program to Know Your Numbers called Manage Your Numbers. Manage Your Numbers is a free support program for those interested and whose screening results show they may be at high risk for heart disease. It provides an initial access point to help team members determine their needs and the follow-up required.

Manage Your Numbers:
- individual coaching provided
- detailed online analysis
- review results of assessment
- create action plan and set goals
- set individual targets
- re-test scheduled for the following year

Through Manage Your Numbers, participants work with a Health Coach (Registered Nurse) for an initial assessment, and to develop a program to help them reach their optimal health goals and control their cholesterol and glucose levels.

From there, team members have access to an array of health professionals including: nurses, nutritionists, heart specialists such as a cardiac nurse or clinical counselor, psychologists, and fitness professionals.

Although we do provide team members with access to health professionals through Know Your Numbers, and follow up through Manage Your Numbers, those with multiple risk factors and high test results are advised to see their doctor for further medical advice. Following a consultation with a medical doctor, they are encouraged to continue working with Manage Your Numbers and related programs.
**Fitness and Active Living**

Keeping focused on the holistic benefits of exercise, TELUS offers its team members on-site fitness facilities at major centres. About 25% of team members who work at these locations take advantage of them.

The cost of the onsite fitness program is a payroll deduction of $20 per month per person. The dues paid by team members cover the cost of administration, equipment upkeep, and new programming. All of the revenue generated through membership dues is invested directly into the onsite fitness program. TELUS provides space and janitorial services at no cost, and on occasion invests capital funds to assist in purchasing new equipment and upgrading the physical facilities.

In 2005, the on-site program had 19 certified fitness volunteers who in addition to their main role in TELUS volunteer their time to teach fitness classes. To continually improve their skills, 2 yearly workshops and first aid and CPR recertification classes are offered free of charge.

For locations where on-site facilities are not available, we have corporate fitness membership agreements in place to facilitate access for team members.

Membership dues cover most fitness classes, strength training orientation and individual consultative advice. Through partnerships with fitness organizations such as Good Life, Fitness World and the YMCA, team members can access memberships with reduced monthly fees. Information on our partners is available to team members through our internal fitness website.

We continue to look at ways to create an active living program to provide more uniform access and personal options for all of our team members across the country.

**Nutrition - Healthy Choices**

TELUS has launched the Healthy Choices Program to provide a greater variety of healthy food and beverage selections to team members. Offering quality cuisine that features healthy food choices reflects the importance TELUS places on the health and well-being of our team members and the interest many team members have shown in such programs as personal nutritional counseling.

Based on consultation with dieticians, TELUS dining centres and vending machines have begun to offer a greater range of healthy alternatives, in addition to options of lower nutritional value. Selections are based on Canada’s Food Guide and accommodate, where possible, special dietary needs. The program’s mandate is 80% compliance to the Food Guide.

In BC, the program was provided in limited locations in the Lower Mainland on a trial basis until September 17, 2007 when Healthy Choices was launched across the country. Healthy Choices now covers all locations regardless of size to include all cafeterias, vending machines and catering services.
Wellness Fairs

In 2005, TELUS continued its focus on increasing team member health awareness by hosting 7 wellness fairs nationally. These expos provided an opportunity for team members to explore a variety of health and wellness options, and to make educated decisions about their own personal wellness.

Currently, these Wellness Fairs are provided on a regional basis, held in buildings where 1,000 or more team members are based, such as our larger call centres.

The Wellness Fairs feature between 20-40 different booths and displays, including internal TELUS teams and booths hosted by health organizations such as the Canadian Blood Service, Canadian Cancer Society, and fitness partners like Good Life, and the YMCA. Onsite health practitioners provide information on the services they provide, the benefits of the service, and the cost to the patient. We may have our Employee Assistance Program provider on hand to provide team members with information about the program and how to access it.

TELUS’ internal ergonomics team provides demonstrations and coaching on healthy work practices, such as how to set up your desk to prevent back and neck strain. We have displays to promote the internal website resources that are available to team members.

From time to time, we feature special displays to profile a particular topic of interest, such as safety. For example, we may provide information and demonstrations on earthquake preparedness in BC, and how to wash your hands properly during flu season.

Although we do not have any retail displays at our Wellness Fairs at this time, Safeway is a major contributor to our wellness fairs. They offer blood pressure checks and provide us with fresh fruit and other nutritious snacks. This partnership developed as a result of the assistance Safeway provided TELUS in organizing and administrating our national flu clinic.

Many of our vendors have also generously provided us with prizes and gift certificates, which help to encourage attendance to our Wellness Fairs.

For locations which are too small or remote to host these expos, we connect our team members by holding an on-line health fair once a year, in conjunction with National Healthy Work Week in October. Team members are alerted to this through an internal bulletin. They are encouraged to access the information provided by the online fair, and then complete a quiz about the information for a chance to win prizes donated by our sponsors.

In 2007, National Healthy Workplace Week takes place between October 22 and 28.
Health Awareness and Training

TELUS also facilitates a variety of training courses such as stress management, work-life balance and conflict resolution. These workshops are offered at a team level as well as on a quarterly basis in several locations for team member self registration. In 2005, TELUS provided over 30 workshops across the country. We have a different theme for the training courses per quarter, according to demand. For example, in March 2007 (nutrition month), we offered Ask a Nutritionist in BC. This involved ten minute discussions, one on one, with a nutritionist.

Employee and Family Assistance Program

To take a holistic view of the health of our team members, it’s important to look at all aspects of their well-being. This includes mental as well as physical.

Through our Employee and Family Assistance Program (EFAP), we provide programs to address a range of factors which can impact a team member’s well being – in particular, those which can add to the amount of stress experienced by an individual or have a more dramatic impact on one’s mental and physical well being. The program provides assistance to team members and their families with issues such as depression, addictions, and bereavement, and services such as crisis intervention and counseling services.

The EFAP also facilitates a variety of training courses, such as stress and time management and conflict resolution. Work/life solutions are also available through EFAP, including proactive lifestyle support in eldercare, nutrition, finance and resiliency coaching.

Smoking Cessation

TELUS’ approach to smoking cessation is more regionally driven and individually focused. People with high cholesterol are often not aware of it, which is why we want to provide screening through Know Your Numbers as widely as possible. By comparison, people who smoke generally already understand the health risks associated with smoking and will not quit until they have made a personal and conscious decision to do so.

Once a team member is ready to quit, TELUS does offer support to help them quit. For any full time member who quits smoking for more than a year, we provide a refund on expenditures they may have made on smoking cessation aids, such as nicotine patches, hypno-therapy, and other items. This provides an incentive to quit as well as recognition of their achievement.

Thinking nationally but acting regionally also enables specialized workshops or activities as required in the various demographic locations. Upon request from the team in Calgary, smoking cessation clinics were held on 3 occasions in 2005.
Convenient access to alternative treatments and health screening

In some of our larger work centres with 1,000 team members or more, we are able to make it more convenient for team members to access other types of health screening and treatments by offering them at the work place. This helps our team members be more productive, and encourages them to access these services.

The types of alternative services offered onsite at some of our worksites include massage therapy, physiotherapy and rehabilitation services, chiropractic, and naturopathic physicians. We examined data from our benefits provider to determine which alternative services are used most often and started with those. We then began to add less traditional services, such as reflexology. We monitor usage on an ongoing basis to ensure that we are meeting the needs of our team members.

These services are available to team members for a fee, which is collected by the individual service providers. However, many team members have access to flexible benefit packages that they can customize according to their individual needs, which can include coverage for these services. Currently in BC, alternative treatments are offered at four worksites in the Lower Mainland.

We have also worked with the BC Mammography Screening Program to use mobile screening units to provide screening and mammography for our team members and retirees. Over the course of a week in February 2007, we facilitated the screening of approximately 500 women through our wellness program. Given the importance of screening to promote early intervention for potentially life-threatening health conditions, this is clearly a health partnership we hope to continue in the future.

Flu Immunization and Awareness Clinics

TELUS offers free flu immunization for full-time team members, available on site at larger work sites. In addition to the traditional pharmaceutical offering, several locations have begun using a natural Immune booster in lieu, administered by a Naturopathic physician. This gives team members a choice while educating them on the preventative measures important in fighting the viruses. Our flu prevention campaign includes an awareness campaign in addition to vaccinations. It encourages team members to be healthy and adopt behaviours that will help them be more resilient to flu such as washing their hands more frequently.
Managing TELUS’ Healthy Living program

TELUS’ corporate health and wellness programs are focused around the idea of empowering TELUS team members to make healthy choices and lead healthier lives.

These programs help TELUS attract and retain talent, as well as increase productivity and reduce absenteeism. In an environment of demographic change, a growing job market and skills shortage, TELUS must be able to compete for workers as well as make the most of the talent we have.

The portfolio of our Healthy Living program has grown over the past number of years, and continues to evolve as we receive input and feedback from team members about what their needs are, and as we measure the impact of new programs we offer.

TELUS has a National Wellness Manager to oversee all aspects of a healthy work environment, building on a comprehensive health awareness program, implemented to provide information, proactive strategies and resources to team members. Since the inception of the role in 2003, the team has grown to include Regional Wellness Consultants in 4 provinces; British Columbia, Alberta, Ontario and Quebec.

With more than 30,000 team members located across Canada at several hundred locations, we continue to leverage several ways of communicating information and wellness options. Internet access provides information to team members who are located in smaller and remote locations.

In 2006, TELUS was honoured for the second consecutive year with the Calgary Chamber of Commerce silver award for wellness in the workplace. The H.E.A.L.T.H. or Helping Employees Achieve Lifetime Health committee in Calgary recognizes companies for their efforts in promoting corporate wellness. In addition, in February 2007, TELUS received an award of merit from the Work Life BC council sponsored by the BC Government, to recognize our commitment to creating balance and flexibility for our team members.
Extending health promotion through ActNow

Many of the goals of Healthy Living mirror those of the Province’s ActNow initiative.

An opportunity that the Province may wish to consider is to extend the reach of ActNow by working with companies and organizations to promote the program’s goals and objectives to their employees.

A primary goal of ActNow is to improve physical fitness and healthy living among children. This can be achieved by promoting health and wellness directly to children and young people in schools. Another avenue is to promote health and wellness to children’s parents in their workplaces, given that parents are the largest influencers of children’s behaviour and lifestyle.

There are a number of potential ways in which ActNow goals could be promoted within workplaces:

- Companies and organizations with employee health and wellness programs could be recognized as ActNow organizations
- Companies could participate in ActNow corporate challenge days to promote health and wellness among employees
- These employers, in turn, could use their internal employee communications channels to promote ActNow literature, information and personal planning guides

TELUS has already begun to include ActNow booths at our team-member Wellness Fairs. As British Columbia’s largest employer, and the largest telecommunications company in the province, we have an unparalleled reach to British Columbians which the Province can leverage. We would be pleased to collaborate further with government to pursue improved health and wellness for British Columbians - objectives we share.
In closing

TELUS is committed to fostering a respectful and healthy workplace where team members can achieve their full potential. Our aim is to create a workplace of choice, and one that incorporates best practices in leadership, learning and development, diversity, employment equity, ethics, compensation and recognition.

TELUS is committed to being an employer of choice. Having the right values, processes, systems and technologies in place to consistently deliver business and workplace experience. It means being committed to open, honest and transparent dialogue about our business with our team members, customers, investors and the communities where we live, work and serve.

The future is very promising. We have a talented and united team. By embedding our healthy workplace strategy into the cornerstone of our business, we continue to made strides in the pursuit of organizational wellness. This positive outlook brings renewed strength to our team members’ health and well-being.

At TELUS, the future really is friendly.