When employees enjoy good health, all will benefit

By Kelli Whitlock

Until recently, April Sallie worried about cholesterol levels about as much as she worried about snow in July. But the 24-year-old got a wake-up call when a health physical revealed her cholesterol level was 239, well above what health professionals consider a safe level.

"It was a shock," said Sallie, a secretary for Ohio State Managed Health Care.

Had it not been for a pilot for a new preventive health-care program for University faculty, staff and their families, Sallie probably wouldn't know about her escalating cholesterol count.

Sallie was one of about 40 people who participated in a clinical pilot evaluation in January, the first phase of the pilot for the OSU Wellness Program.

The next pilot will begin in late spring with University leaders, Kell Agnoli, program director for the Wellness Program, said he hopes the program will be ready for a larger pilot in the fall, which would be open to about 3,000 employees.

The idea for the program was developed last year by members of the University Health Care Advisory Committee, said Linda Tom, vice president for human resources. Tom charged the Wellness Subcommittee with the task of developing a plan for the program, which will help University faculty, staff and their families evaluate existing and potential health problems.

"We wanted to create a program that would encourage people to look at preventing illness and focus on their wellness," Tom said. "We hope this program will make participants more attentive to their lifestyle, which will make them healthier and able to live longer, fuller lives."

Participants in the pilot included members of the advisory committee and the Wellness Subcommittee and staff in Human Resources and OSU Managed Health Care.

Participants completed a questionnaire that evaluated their eating and exercise habits, how well they managed stress, and other factors that impact their overall health. They also were given a physical examination that included measurements of blood pressure, glucose level, cholesterol level, height and weight.

"I was truly surprised by how easy it was," Sallie said. "It was very thorough, but very quick."

The evaluation and responses to the questionnaire were evaluated and each participant received a health evaluation.

Robert Meier, who participated in the clinical exam, said he is looking forward to the next phase of the program, a fitness assessment that will include a measurement of body fat.

"I'm even looking forward to that," said Meier, mental health administrator for OSU Managed Health Care.

Following his clinical exam, the 42-year-old was told his cholesterol was too high and that he was bordering on high blood pressure. Since he has a family history of hypertension, this news alarmed him.

"While I'm eligible for annual physicals, I don't always go," he said. "So I wouldn't have known about this had it not been for the program."

Participants will begin the fitness evaluation this month. Exercise physiology students will do a body composition analysis, measure strength and flexibility, and do an exercise test.

Results from the fitness and clinical assessments will be combined to help participants set goals for a healthier lifestyle. Some may be referred to a University or community program that offers stress management techniques or some may be given suggestions for an exercise program.

Participants also will be placed in a risk category. People who are found to be at high risk — those with high blood pressure and cholesterol levels, or those without appropriate stress management techniques — will be asked to follow up with the Wellness Program team every 30 days. Others may only need to check in once a year, to see how well they met their goals.

Health-care professionals from different University departments work with the Wellness Program. Representatives from the Department of Exercise Physiology, the University, Faculty and Staff Assistance Program, PrimeCare, Student Health Services, and others also are participating.

The program is unique in that it strives to address most health needs, including improving mental health.

"Traditionally mental health services have been sought only when people are in crisis," Meier said. "This screening process will enable us to intervene much earlier, provide education and help participants before a crisis occurs."

Another unique aspect will be Wellness Ambassadors. The ambassadors will link their departments and the Wellness Program. April said,
Older Adult Caregiver Support Group

This support group will meet once per month on the fourth Monday of each month.

5 p.m. – 6:30 p.m.
The NeuroScience Building,
1670 Upham Drive, Room 202N

June 24    July 22
August 26  September 23
October 28 November 25
~ 2002 ~

For more information or to register, please contact Lisa Borelli, LISW, University Faculty and Staff Assistance Program, 293-2060 or via email, borelli.3@osu.edu
The Ohio State University Faculty and Staff Wellness Program and the Office of Human Resources invites you to attend this FREE health screening and education event in recognition of National Women's Health Week, May 11-17.

**Tribute to Women's Health**

**Wednesday, May 14, 2003**

9 a.m. - 1 p.m.

University Health Connection

100 Parks Hall (College of Pharmacy)

500 W. 12th Ave.

Opportunities to have on-site exams and learn about available OSU resources regarding nutrition, exercise, osteoporosis, benefits of massage therapy and reflexology, health risk assessment and acupuncture. (Please wear removable sock for osteoporosis screening.)

To schedule an appointment for a pelvic exam* and/or mammogram*, please contact Karen Mayer at 292-1724. Space is limited so call today!

*Standard co-payment applies to these services only.

*Please note: Your participation in the Wellness Program is voluntary and confidential.*