

Stats: 86% would change jobs to get more professional development

A robust 86% of professionals said they would change jobs if they were offered more opportunities for professional development, according to a recently released 2019 hiring outlook report, "The Employee Experience: 4 Ways to Attract, Engage & Retain Employees in Today's Competitive Market." According to The Execu/Search Group, its report "provides insights into factors that most impact employee engagement and wellbeing" to help organizations improve the employee experience, from hiring to retention.

Other findings include:

- 78% of employers said they are providing training or development opportunities, but 58% of professionals on staff disagreed.
- 57% of employees said they do not have a clear understanding of what's required of them in order to earn a promotion.
- 45% don't feel their employer promotes a healthy work-life balance.

COMMENT: "Professionals consider their careers an integral part of their lives and they expect their job to provide meaning," said Edward Fleischman, CEO of The Execu|Search Group. "Top performers who do not feel engaged or supported at work will be first to leave, so our (report) is meant to provide employers with tools for creating a culture focused on building a strong employee experience."

SOURCE: Execu/Search Group (January 7, 2019)

Beers Criteria for (in)appropriate medications updated

The American Geriatrics Society (AGS) recently released its latest update to one of geriatrics' most frequently cited reference tools: The AGS Beers Criteria® for Potentially Inappropriate Medication Use in Older Adults. More than 90% of older people are taking at least one prescription medicine, and more than 66% are taking three or more in any given month. Therefore, according to AGS, this compendium of medications potentially to avoid or consider with caution "plays a vital role in helping health professionals, older adults, and caregivers work together to ensure medications are appropriate."

The updated reference includes lists of medications worth discussing because they may not be the safest or most appropriate options for older adults. Though not an exhaustive catalogue of inappropriate treatments, the five lists included in the criteria describe particular medications with evidence suggesting they should be:

- Avoided by most older people (outside of hospice and palliative care settings);
- Avoided by older people with specific health conditions;
- Avoided in combination with other treatments because of the risk for harmful "drug-drug" interactions;
- Used with caution because of the potential for harmful side effects; or
- Dosed differently or avoided among people with reduced kidney function, which impacts how the body processes medicine.

COMMENT: This is a valuable reference for everyone who works with older adults in any capacity. In addition to pdfs of the five lists, the HealthinAging.org web page includes two consumer-facing pdfs:

“My Medication Diary” and “What to Do and What to Ask: If a Medication You Take is Listed in the Beers Criteria,” which can be distributed to constituents.

The authors remind readers that “potentially inappropriate medications are just that—potentially inappropriate. They merit special scrutiny but should not be misconstrued as universally unacceptable in all cases or for all people.”

SOURCE: American Geriatrics Society (January 31, 2019)

Meaningful life linked to healthy aging

Engaging in activities perceived to be worthwhile, such as supporting children and grandchildren or completing a satisfying project, are linked to walking faster, sleeping better and experiencing less chronic pain in later life, according to researchers from University College London, UK.

Researchers analyzed data and biological markers from over 7,000 adults 50+ between 2012 and 2016 who had taken part in the English Longitudinal Study of Ageing. Participants were asked to what extent they felt the things they did in their life were worthwhile on a scale of one to ten.

Compared with those who did not feel the things they do in life are worthwhile, those with high ratings walked 18% faster, had an average 13% higher concentration of vitamin D in their bloods, and were more than twice as likely to report having good sleep.

Feeling life is meaningful also was linked to strong personal relationships, affluence (income and wealth), healthier lifestyles, better mental and physical health, and more time spent exercising and socializing.

Further, higher ratings of doing worthwhile activities in 2012 predicted better outcomes four years later. Compared with people who reported higher worthwhile ratings, people with low ratings were twice as likely to develop depressive symptoms, and 30% more likely to develop chronic pain.

COMMENT: This study documents an investment in all the wellness dimensions to encourage meaningful, worthwhile activities, and shows benefits in the physical, as well as the social and emotional, realms.

SOURCES: University College London, UK; PNAS January 22, 2019; 116 (4) 1207-1212

Discourage surgery for shoulder pain: expert panel

Surgery should not be performed in almost all patients with a common cause of shoulder pain known as subacromial pain syndrome or SAPS (also called shoulder impingement or rotator cuff disease), say a panel of international experts.

Their strong recommendation against surgery is based on recent trials that found that decompression surgery provided no benefit over placebo surgery, or other options such as painkillers, exercises, and steroid injections. Also, frozen shoulder may be more common with surgery.

The “new and sound evidence should change practice, given the risk of harm and burden to patients and waste of health care resources,” they say. In the UK alone, there were 21,000 such procedures performed in National Health Service hospitals in 2010, at a cost of about GBP50 million (US\$64 million).

COMMENT: "Clinicians should not offer patients subacromial decompression surgery unprompted, and clinicians, public healthcare providers, and others should make efforts to educate the public regarding the ineffectiveness of surgery," the authors state. "Although we did not take costs and resources into account beyond direct costs to patients (such as out-of-pocket costs), surgery cannot be cost effective given the lack of important benefit, potential for harm, and associated costs."

SOURCE: BMJ 2019;364: l294 (February 6, 2019)

Exercise may boost brain function in those with MCI

Exercise training reduces brain blood flow and improved cognitive performance in a group of 17 older adults with mild cognitive impairment (MCI), according to University of Maryland School of Public Health researchers.

"A reduction in blood flow may seem a little contrary to what you would assume happens after going on an exercise program," said Dr. J. Carson Smith of the Department of Kinesiology. "But after 12 weeks of exercise, adults with MCI experienced decreases in cerebral blood flow. They simultaneously improved significantly in their scores on cognitive tests."

Dr. Smith explained that for those beginning to experience subtle memory loss, the brain is in "crisis mode" and may try to compensate for the inability to function optimally by increasing cerebral blood flow. While elevated cerebral blood flow is usually considered beneficial to brain function, there is evidence to suggest it may actually be a harbinger of further memory loss in those diagnosed with MCI.

The results suggest exercise may have the potential to reduce this compensatory blood flow and improve cognitive efficiency in those in the very early stages of Alzheimer's Disease, according to the authors.

A control group of 18 cognitively healthy older adults without mild cognitive impairment also underwent the exercise training program, consisting of four 30-minute sessions of moderate-intensity treadmill walking per week. But the program yielded different responses.

Unlike the group with MCI, whose exercise training decreased cerebral blood flow, the exercise training increased cerebral blood flow in the frontal cortex in the healthy group after 12 weeks. Their performance on the cognitive tests also significantly improved, as was observed the MCI group.

COMMENT: Regardless of the mechanism, and although the findings need to be confirmed in larger studies, the study offers one more reason for constituents to exercise regularly, and offers a window into how the body and brain respond in the face of a complex disease.

SOURCES: University of Maryland; Journal of Alzheimer's Disease; Vol 67, no. 2, pp. 671-684, 2019 (January 22, 2019)