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### Introduction

There is a clear link between dietary behaviour and a range of chronic disease, and overweight and obesity constitute an indirect risk in relation to these diseases <sup>1</sup>. The workplace has been recognised as an ideal setting to promote healthy behaviours since most individuals spend two-thirds of their waking hours at work <sup>2</sup>. Research identifies that the workplace can play an important role in the promotion of healthy food choices <sup>3</sup>. Nutrition education and multi-component workplace dietary interventions have a positive effect on dietary behaviours, especially fruit and vegetable consumption. Workplaces which were reaching for a goal, such as obtaining certification <sup>4</sup>, were found to be positive and had a beneficial effect on employees. Happy Heart at work initiative <sup>5</sup> is an Irish Heart Foundation programme which aims to assist workplaces to plan, implement and maintain a healthy lifestyle programme for employees.

### Aims

1. Investigate the demand for health promotion activities; as outlined in Happy Heart Programme.
2. Develop strategies to empower this population group to lead healthier lifestyles.

### Method

A survey tool was designed to investigate the specific lifestyle behaviours and workplace environment changes to support healthy eating behaviours in the workplace. The development of this quantitative survey was informed by the knowledge and insight gained from the literature review on healthy eating strategies in the workplace. Information was measured from a representative sample of employees in Roscommon University Hospital (n=48).

### Results

- 72% of this sample workforce would like to see healthier snacks and dinner options available, which would include homemade soup, more fruit and vegetable variety and healthy low calorie dinner dishes.

- Cookery demonstrations were the most popular activity (63%), that employees would like to see introduced in the workplace.
- Happy heart education sessions (50%) and a dedicated healthy eating week (50%) were identified as initiatives that would be beneficial in the workplace.
- 42% of this sample group expressed that they would like a guest speaker to deliver information on general health and wellbeing.
- 10% indicated that very little change was required to improve the current dinner and snack options.

### Discussion

- There is a clear interest amongst this research group in following a structured catering initiative on food choices, like the Happy Heart at Work programme.
- These health promotion activities include both a focus on the individual and addressing the work environment, as supported by management and employee consultation.

### Conclusion

Heart disease and stroke is still the leading cause of death in Ireland. Lifestyle changes can reduce the risk or delay the onset of heart related disease. Improving employee health by introducing comprehensive approaches to health promotion in the workplace can have a long-term positive impact on health and wellbeing.

### References

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4. Lassena, A., et al (2014). Improving the diet of employees at blue collar worksites: results from the food at work intervention study. *Public health nutrition*. 14(06) pp.965-974.
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