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**Steps to a Better You Assessment of Marshfield Clinic Female Employees
20-week Walking Incentive Program**

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Background: There are many examples of worksites implementing activity incentive programs designed to increase employee physical activity, fitness, and health, but conflicting results have been reported on the effectiveness of these programs. For example, it is still unclear whether or not worksite wellness programs have a significant impact on participants' body weight and body mass, as well as overall well-being. To improve our understanding of a worksite program's impact on employee's health, we report the findings of Steps to a Better You, a 20-week worksite-walking program at the Marshfield Clinic.

Methods: The 20-week walking incentive program took place between March 31, 2005 and August 20, 2005. Subjects for this study consisted of Marshfield Clinic employees volunteering for the program. All participants' data were collected through online forms hosted on the Marshfield Clinic's secure intranet site using Microsoft Front Page2000. Information included the level of physical activity, general fitness and well-being, biometric measurements on body mass index (BMI) and blood pressure, before and after participating in the program. A total of 756 employees registered for the program, of which 724 were female. Of those 724 women, 191 (26%) have completed the program and responded to the survey. Only their data were included in the analysis. Distributions of selected characteristics for the 191 women were described as percentages or means for both pre- and post-program. Comparisons between pre- and post-program data were done using McNemar or Wilcoxon signed rank tests for paired data. A p-value of less than 0.05 was claimed statistically significant.

Results: Our data show a statistically significant ($p < .0001$) increase in participants' physical activity level, while a significant ($p = .021$) decrease in mean BMI was also observed. However, there was no evidence of our incentive program on the effect of blood pressure reduction.

Conclusions: Preliminary findings of our study suggest that the goal of worksite programs, designed to support employees in their efforts to improve or maintain their level of wellness, is potentially achievable. Continuing research is needed to further assess whether there exist persistent health benefits induced by worksite wellness programs.