

## **Media Release:**

### **World Heart Day: “Work with Heart”**

One in four of your female colleagues or one in three of your male colleagues could die as a result of South Africa’s primary killer - heart disease. Recent statistics from a Corporate Absenteeism Management Solutions (CAMS) survey of 60 South African companies with more than 7000 employees over the course of a year, revealed that sick absenteeism costs corporate SA about R19 billion per year.

**World Heart Day**, celebrated on the **27<sup>th</sup> September**, re-enforces the importance of corporate wellness with this year’s theme being “Work with Heart”. This international health awareness Day aims at creating awareness of heart disease in the workplace and encourages employers to take action and ensure the health of their workforce.

Currently, one-third of the global workforce suffers from preventable diseases and by 2025 the burden of such diseases is expected to increase by 25%. This does not include the expected impact of the economic downturn on employees’ mental and physical health, which is why it is so important for companies to continue investing in employee health.

### **Establishing a Corporate Wellness Programme in the workplace**

Poor health of employees has a devastating impact on the revenue of a company as it reduces productivity. As a result, many companies have fostered a new approach to employee health with the implementation of Corporate Wellness Programmes.

The Heart and Stroke Foundation South Africa (HSFSA) offers a Corporate Wellness Programme to a company, which creates awareness of heart disease and its risk factors. HSFSA offers blood pressure, cholesterol and glucose screening for staff members, as well as a health risk report of these screenings to management, at a minimal fee.

“Wellness promotion at work is a positive and effective way to fight the alarming incidence of cardiovascular disease in our country”, says Shân Biesman-Simons, Director of Nutrition and Education at HSFSA.

High blood pressure and high cholesterol have few visible symptoms, therefore testing is crucial. A healthy diet, regular exercise and a balanced approach to life ensures a healthy heart and body with a stronger immune system.

Wellness Programmes in the workplace that incorporate healthy environments, health promotion, education and health screenings have been shown to:

- Improve employee health
- Reduce employee stress
- Reduce workforce turnover
- Reduce absenteeism
- Create a healthier organisational culture, and
- Improve employee morale and loyalty.

**Corporate Wellness** adds value to the corporate world as it proves to be an invaluable asset to increasing a company's productivity, boosts employee morale and contributes to a more profitable company.

"Companies need to move their focus from illness to that of wellness, by investing in the education of staff, establishing health policies, promoting exercise and provide healthier menu options at the canteen, as well as providing free heart health checks. Heart disease is a preventable disease that can easily be detected through simple screenings of blood pressure, cholesterol and glucose," said Biesman-Simons.

For further information on establishing a healthier workforce in your company, contact The Heart and Stroke Foundation SA on Tel: 021 447 4222 or visit our website [www.heartfoundation.co.za](http://www.heartfoundation.co.za)

Ends.

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**The Heart and Stroke Foundation SA**

The Heart and Stroke Foundation South Africa is a community-based organisation established to reduce the incidence of heart disease and stroke in the population of South Africa by providing education and supporting vital research. For further information visit [www.heartfoundation.co.za](http://www.heartfoundation.co.za).