

The best of health

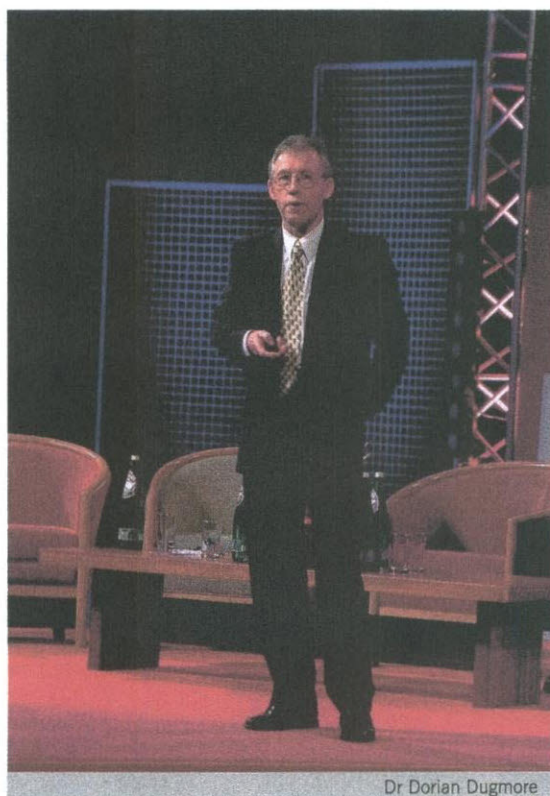
Dr Dorian Dugmore believes that corporate well-being is underpinned by the health of a company's most precious asset – its people. He talked to Jayne Flannery about the roll of **Wellness International** in optimising the performance of senior executives and their employees

Dr Dorian Dugmore is a man with a mission. The profit and loss account may be the bottom line when it comes to evaluating corporate health, but his overriding message is that it is increasingly the condition of a company's human assets that underpins its overall success.

Stress together with obesity and diabetes dramatically increases heart disease risk and can exact a devastating toll on top managers and the performance of the companies in their charge. This risk is even greater given the typical time of life when senior managers reach their professional peak. There are few professionals in their 50s that are not aware of friends or colleagues that have succumbed to heart disease or cancer, both largely the results of unhealthy western lifestyles. Dr Dugmore believes that the provision of appropriate preventative healthcare interventions and lifestyle support can transform not only individual well-being, but is also a vital dimension to corporate well-being in the 21st century. This is the role that Wellness International, the company he created 10 years ago, has assumed.

Wellness International works in two key ways. Firstly, the company offers lifestyle interventions, support and counselling for executives from its own state-of-the-art facilities at Stockport. Then there is The Wellness Café. This is where Wellness hits the road, metaphorically speaking. One or more teams of healthcare professionals can be sent to wherever in the world that they are needed. At the time of our interview, a team had recently returned from the World Economic Forum at Davos in Switzerland where 70 of the world's top executives had been put through their paces.

Dr Dugmore, who was a board member at the



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Forum, was delighted with the high profile given to the Wellness agenda at Davos. "It illustrates the growing importance which is attached to preventative medicine and effective healthcare in the 21st century," he stated. Moreover, for those companies which wish to take seriously their commitment to corporate social responsibility, there can be no better starting point than the care of their own staff.

He is also keen to point out that there is a compelling economic argument. "For every pound that is spent on a Wellness programme, investors can look to a three- or four-fold return," he said. "Such interventions will result in reduced absenteeism, reduced turnover of key people and better overall performance, both at the level of the individual and at the level of the enterprise they are managing. The profit and loss account of your executive's health sits directly alongside the profit and loss of your overall business."

In terms of optimising overall health, he is eager to stress that it is the interventions between visits to the doctor that really matter. This is the essence of preventative medicine and the primary focus of Wellness International. When it comes to providing straightforward assessments of health, he is quick to agree that there are many competitors out there that can undertake similar initial evaluations. "We have a different focus when compared with our competitors," he commented. "What sets us apart is the care we take over monitoring and tracking the individuals who work with us. We re-test and re-assess at six monthly intervals and offer ongoing fine-tuning, which means shifting and changing goals, objectives and approaches over time. It is this emphasis on follow up and tracking



Healthy eating promotion

which makes Wellness International so special.”

It is also a highly holistic approach to healthcare. “Typically, we may begin with a focus on exercise and nutrition. Then we will often switch emphasis to support changes in lifestyle management and here our clients may want to involve their partners and families. This is increasingly where I see the future of upstream healthcare, as something which is an issue for the family unit as a whole rather than the individual alone,” he stated.

Dr Dugmore’s own credentials are impeccable. The sporting giant adidas funded his doctorate in cardiovascular medicine and a strategic partnership has existed ever since.

“We own 100 per cent of Wellness International, but adidas were instrumental in funding our health-care programme and the world class facilities that we offer at the adidas Centre in Stockport,” he explained. Adidas gets a world class Wellness service for its people and an ongoing return on their investment by taking a percentage of the fees generated. “It is a unique business model that is now making its potential apparent,” he added.

Polar UK is another strategic partner. A Finnish company, Polar is a world leader in the design and manufacture of heart rate monitors and it is a natural alliance. The company’s CEO Malcolm Douglas is another Wellness enthusiast and is on the Wellness programme himself. “We want to work with other companies that are leaders in their field and to offer our clients the very best that is available, whether that is adidas sportswear or Polar monitors

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to check their heart rate,” said Dr Dugmore.

He is particularly proud of the partnership that Wellness has forged with the League Association (LMA) and with John Barnwell, its chief executive. The company is currently working with 85 premiership football league managers who are under intense pressure to deliver results. It is widely recognised that the placing of their teams directly correlates to their own physical and emotional well-being. “These men might have been top athletes in their former careers, but we have identified that 40 per cent of them have some form of cardiovascular risk that needs to be addressed,” he said.

The corporate sector though is what most excites him. “This is where we see the future of Wellness. The MD of adidas, Gil Steyaert, believes that the best companies of the future will have a wellness plan that sits alongside their corporate plan. It is a very important concept to get across and the essence of our vision for the future,” he concluded. ■