



Nestlé extends healthcare in remote communities

How to implement a comprehensive healthcare programme in challenging locations

Nestlé, the winner of the International SOS Foundation's 2017 Duty of Care Award in the category Remote Healthcare, implemented a detailed healthcare programme at its Lae factory in Papua New Guinea. This significantly extended its healthcare delivery and health promotion initiatives to its employees and their dependents.

Working in remote locations has inherent risks and challenges. In particular, access to professional standards of healthcare advice, equipment and medication can be seriously limited. This can affect the wellbeing of employees, their dependents and the wider community.

To address these issues, at its factory in Lae, PNG, Nestlé implemented a detailed healthcare programme. This includes improved clinical facilities, the collection of detailed data to assess and baseline current health issues and the launch of numerous health promotion initiatives.

Developing Community-Wide Care

Justin Pratt, SHE Manager, Nestlé Oceania, explains: **"Nestlé's vision is that all our employees live a safe and healthy life. Nothing we do at work is worth the risk of getting hurt; for work-related injuries and illnesses, our goal is zero. But our commitment goes beyond the workplace. We want our employees to live in a safe and healthy way at all locations. Our operations in Lae are an excellent example of how we wish to realise our vision."**

Commitment and Leadership

Leadership is essential in driving the Nestlé health programme forward, both at corporate and operational level. Nestlé HQ in Vevey, Switzerland was instrumental in developing safety and health 'know how' and skills through enhanced training, coaching, and other mechanisms. At the Lae location, the programme was implemented by the factory's CEO and other senior team members, working closely with Occupational Health and HSE personnel at Nestlé HQ.

Service Provision

Upgrading the Lae clinic was a key step in enabling the team to quickly quantify and identify actions that would improve the wellbeing of all.

The next step was extending the health service provision to employee dependants. The overall aim is to help improve general community health.

Data Gathering and Assessment

A robust, centralised reporting system was developed by the Occupational Health staff working closely with the Medical Director. The clinic health data they have amassed is vital in identifying and pre-empting health-related issues.

The team started by looking at non-communicable diseases by measuring and reporting patients' biometrics when they attended the clinic. Weight, height, blood pressure and glycemia were some aspects assessed. The team then built up a baseline picture of the factory workers' health. They also started to examine other environmental factors such as smoking status and alcohol consumption, as well as betel nut consumption, which is a potential health risk specific to the region.

Further clinic health data collection and analysis aims to find out more about any injuries incurred by employees to see if these are linked to any specific activity or work location.

Health Promotion

The clinic health data enables the team to prioritise subjects for health promotion. These plans are set out in a detailed Health Recommendations Report. The report highlights issues and provides recommendations for improving the health clinic service and the health of Nestlé employees. As well as taking into account the data captured by the local team, it responds to concerns highlighted by Nestlé's management team and the Regional Medical Director's site visits.



Above Onsite clinic at the Lae factory

The ongoing health agenda for the factory's employees includes raising awareness by distributing health promotion materials, giving health talks to employees and holding health promotion days.

Specific initiatives are:

- With 49% of employees either overweight or obese, initiatives included health education on healthy eating/food choices, a review of available food onsite and promoting increased physical activity.
- With 42% of employees identified as smokers, smoking cessation is another priority. Planned promotions included: displaying smoking cessation posters, providing smoke-free zones in the workplace and offering support to those who want to quit.
- Musculoskeletal complaints have accounted for a large number of clinic attendances. As well as initiatives to raise awareness, stretching exercises are encouraged before shifts begin.
- Colds and other common ailments can also be a problem. This is being addressed through increased awareness of handwashing, cough etiquette and flu prevention guidelines.
- Other initiatives examine family planning, tuberculosis and fatigue management.

Results

The benefits of this approach are already clear. These include:

- A significant reduction in absenteeism, from 12% to 4% in the first year.
- Early identification of illnesses and more appropriate referral procedures in place.
- Reduced costs associated with absenteeism.
- Higher levels of productivity in the factory.
- An improved business reputation in the local community.

As Justin Pratt concludes: **"The factory in Lae is hopefully the first of many examples of remote communities positively impacted by the presence of Nestlé."**

KEY ELEMENTS

Establishing an effective healthcare programme in a remote location benefits from:

Commitment and leadership

Adequate service provision

Data gathering and assessment

Targeted health promotion initiatives

For information on the 2017 Duty of Care Awards winners in all categories, go to www.dutyofcareawards.org.