

SIGMA ASSISTEL

April 2010

Sigma Assistel, a Canadian leader in telephone assistance services and a subsidiary of Desjardins Financial Security, serves more than five million Canadians. Sigma Assistel is committed to providing businesses and organizations with high-quality assistance services 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The Company has obtained ISO 9001:2008 certification. The author, Elisabeth Boisvert, is Marketing Consultant for Sigma Assistel.

Better support for those who have the courage to adopt a healthier lifestyle

Organizations, employers and government agencies often remind us of the importance of changing our behaviour to reduce our risk for certain health problems. Their programs are well designed, but a piece of the puzzle is often missing and it is also available. That's where we come in. Let's look at this issue, using a specific example.

Lifestyle habits and heart disease

Of the many potential lifestyle-related health problems, I've chosen heart disease, as it's the leading cause of death in Canadians. According to the Heart and Stroke Foundation, heart disease is responsible for one in three deaths.

Of course, some risk factors cannot be controlled (age, gender, family history, ethnicity, history of heart attack or stroke, etc.). But there are many that can be. These lifestyle-related risk factors include smoking, excessive alcohol consumption, physical inactivity, being overweight, high blood pressure, high blood cholesterol, and diabetes.

According to the Heart and Stroke Foundation, 90% of Canadians have at least one risk factor for heart disease. That means that nine in ten people could reduce their risk of suffering a heart attack or stroke by making lifestyle changes.

Support is available

Not everyone is ready to make the move towards a healthier lifestyle. It isn't easy, and many people aren't willing to do what it takes.

Proper support is essential in this challenging process of change. Established programs offer various resources in addition to what's already available:

- ❖ Existing programs
 - Programs created by various organizations
 - Physical fitness providers (fitness centres, classes, etc.)
 - Information sources (magazines, guides, books, Internet, special television programs, etc.)
- ❖ Motivational sources
 - Monetary or other incentives
 - Support groups
 - Encouragement from friends and family
- ❖ Healthcare professionals resources
 - These often include dietitians, nutritionists and kinesiologists.

There are few healthcare professionals available to help. And, because these professionals specialize in a specific aspect of health, rather than overall health, many important aspects aren't covered. In addition, very few Canadians take the initiative to consult a dietitian or kinesiologist on their own. Finally, because of the shortage of medical resources in the healthcare system, it's very difficult to see a doctor or nurse to discuss lifestyle changes. If they're lucky, patients get to see someone once or twice a year. Yet these lifestyle changes are important and made quickly. Finally, most of us would agree that it's a good idea, even essential, that those with particular health issues see a healthcare professional on a regular basis.

That's when the Health Assistance Service becomes particularly important. Thanks to this service, a registered nurse is available to answer individuals' health questions, with 24/7 telephone support that complements the expertise offered through existing resources. With their general health knowledge, the nurse can make sure that lifestyle changes are made safely and, most importantly, are adapted to each person's specific situation. It's one more source of support in this challenging process of change!

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