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Aetna Building a Case for a “Mind-Body” Approach to Stress Management
-- Aetna, Duke Integrative Medicine, eMindful Inc. and American Viniyoga Institute Conduct
Randomized Controlled Studies on Potential of Therapeutic Yoga and Meditation
to Reduce Stress and Improve Health--
-- Initial results prompt Aetna to expand pilot in 2011 --

HARTFORD, Conn., January 13, 2011 – Aetna (NYSE: [AET](#)) today announced that early results from randomized controlled pilot studies of two stress-reduction programs showed significant reductions in stress as compared to the control group. Aetna’s review of medical claims’ data showed a positive correlation between costs and study participants’ stress levels, suggesting potential health care costs savings could be realized by reducing stress. Additionally, health improvements were suggested in the treatment groups over controls, leading to further studies.

Aetna collaborated with eMindful Inc.’s research team headed by Ruth Q. Wolever, PhD, Director of Research at Duke Integrative Medicine, and Gary Kraftsow, MA, E-RYT 500 of the American Viniyoga Institute, to test whether mind-body approaches, such as mindfulness meditation and therapeutic yoga, can reduce stress and improve overall health. The success of both programs offers evidence that certain mind-body approaches can be an effective complement to conventional medicine, a field broadly known as Integrative Medicine.

“Helping people take control of their health is a critical step in achieving better health and reducing the cost of health care,” said Aetna CEO and President Mark Bertolini. “Stress takes a significant toll on physical and mental health. We want to understand, and also demonstrate, whether integrative medicine can offer our members options that both better suit their lifestyles and can be proven to improve their health. We will continue to build an evidence base for the mind-body approach to health.”

The American Psychological Association estimates that 43 percent of U.S. adults suffer adverse health effects from stress including reduced immunity to illness, increased risk of diabetes and weight gain. Among the Aetna study volunteers, those reporting the highest level of stress had higher medical costs, nearly \$2,000 more annually, than those reporting the lowest level of stress.

“Prior evidence for effectiveness of stress-reduction programs has typically been linked to higher program doses – requiring more class time and intensity,” said Dr. Ruth Wolever, director of research at Duke

Integrative Medicine and Principal Investigator on the study. “We found these new mind-body programs to produce results in about half the time of other commonly used mind-body interventions. We are highly encouraged by the effectiveness observed in these studies.”

“The positive results seen in these studies offer evidence that mind-body approaches to health improvement are an effective and targeted solution for employers who want to lower the costs associated with stress and help their employees achieve better overall health,” said Kyra Bobinet, MD, MPH, medical director of Health and Wellness Innovation at Aetna, and clinical director of the study. “Furthermore, the studies showed that online classes and in-person delivery showed equivalent results, and both had high engagement rates among participants. This finding is particularly important as it will enable the program to be offered to customers with employees in multiple locations and among different organizational levels.”

Research study

In 2010, 239 Aetna employees who volunteered to participate in a mind-body stress reduction program had access to a pilot that offered complementary therapies focused on mindfulness meditation and yoga. As part of the studies, 96 employees were assigned to mindfulness-based classes, 90 were assigned to therapeutic yoga classes and 53 were assigned as the control group.

The 12-week mindfulness meditation-based online program was developed and offered by eMindful. Participants interacted using video, audio and instant messaging chat or in-person instruction. Expert instructors from eMindful helped participants learn self-care, with the objective of improving overall health and energy levels. Participants also learned stress reduction techniques, more effective management of work load and better ways to prioritize tasks to increase efficiency and effectiveness.

The second group of Aetna employees participated in a 12-week therapeutic yoga-based program developed by American Viniyoga Institute founder Gary Kraftsow. Participants received instruction for managing stress including physical yoga postures, breathing techniques, guided relaxation and mental skills. The yoga classes helped relieve muscle tension in the back, neck and shoulders, improve sleep and increase feelings of well-being. The classes also provided coping strategies for dealing with stressful events and promoted use of home and office strategies for reducing stress through yoga. The program offered weekly in-person classes, home practice handouts and yoga break handouts for home and office use.

“According to the National Institutes of Health, 40 percent of Americans use alternative health therapies and, among these, mind-body techniques have shown the greatest increase in adoption over the past few years,” said Eleese Wright, head of Human Resources at Aetna. “We are seeing the benefits first-hand here at Aetna. We offer programs and services that balance the focus between the physical aspects of health, as well as the mind and emotions.”

Aetna will expand the research studies to more Aetna employees, and pilot the mind-body programs with select employers this year. Full results from the pilot program will be available later this year.

About Aetna

Aetna is one of the nation's leading diversified health care benefits companies, serving approximately 35.4 million people with information and resources to help them make better informed decisions about their health care. Aetna offers a broad range of traditional and consumer-directed health insurance products and related services, including medical, pharmacy, dental, behavioral health, group life and disability plans, and medical management capabilities and health care management services for Medicaid plans. Our customers include employer groups, individuals, college students, part-time and hourly workers, health plans, governmental units, government-sponsored plans, labor groups and expatriates. For more information, see www.aetna.com. To learn more about Aetna's innovative online tools, visit www.aetnatools.com.

About eMindful

eMindful, Inc. (www.eMindful.com) is the nation's leading evidence-based provider of *live*, online mind-body wellness programs. Its courses are led by highly credentialed instructors who deliver engaging curriculums in a virtual classroom to participants around the world. With the ability of participants and instructors to interact with each other in a real-time format the resultant experience produces an effective and efficient means of learning. eMindful, Inc. is based in Vero Beach, FL and has support facilities throughout the United States.

About Duke Integrative Medicine

Duke Integrative Medicine is a gateway to patients' optimal health and healing, a portal to the vast spectrum of scientific advances at Duke Medicine, and an open door to the innate healing power held within each person. The focus of care is on individual patients and how cutting-edge medical research and the powerful impact of their knowledge, choices and spirit can transform their health and healing. Duke Integrative Medicine guides patients through the complexity of modern medicine to unleash their individual power for optimal health. Experts partner with patients -- providing treatments, resources, time and support -- so they can address and plan for all their health needs and goals

About American Viniyoga Institute

American Viniyoga Institute (AVI) is an organization of yoga practitioners and professionals sharing core values, guided by the teachings of Viniyoga, and dedicated to offering quality experiential educational and professional training opportunities in the fields of health and fitness, therapy and self-care and personal transformation. AVI (www.viniyoga.com) is a leader in the United States in training advanced-level Viniyoga teachers and yoga therapists.

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