Expatriates at Higher Risk for Mental Health Issues and Substance Abuse Problems

Joint study published by Chestnut Global Partners and the Truman Group underscores need for specialized EAP or mental health services as expat workforce expected to expand.

Bloomington, IL (PRWEB) March 14, 2012 -- A new study, conducted jointly by Chestnut Global Partners (CGP) and the Truman Group, reveals that expatriates face a higher overall risk for mental health problems, including internalizing and externalizing problems, and substance use disorders. More broadly, the study found that more than 50% of the expatriates in the study were at high risk for internalizing problems (such as anxiety and depression), a rate 2.5 times their U.S.-based counterparts.

“Studies estimate that American expatriates have rates of assignment failure as high as 40%, which often results from stress caused by cultural differences and demanding workloads,” says study co-author Dave Sharar, Ph.D., Managing Director of Chestnut Global Partners, the international employee assistance arm of Chestnut Health Systems. “This study is the first to examine and establish that expatriates and their families do experience higher levels of stress than their U.S. counterparts. As the number of expatriates is expected to increase, our findings underscore the need to design programs and provide services that mitigate the challenges of living and working abroad.”

According to the 2011 Global Relocation Trends Survey report from Brookfield GRS, there was a 61% increase in expat assignments in 2011 following a downturn the previous year that resulted from economic pressures. Moreover, the study highlighted the role of family dynamics in expatriate assignments and cited the top challenges as partner resistance (47%) and family adjustment (32%).

“Family members can be deeply affected by relocation, which makes it imperative to have readily accessible programs and services to address their needs as well as those of the expat,” says study co-author Sean D. Truman, Ph.D., LP, director of clinical services at the Truman Group. “At the same time, this study suggests that there are meaningful and powerful links between each expat’s internal experience of stress and the ways in which they relate to people in their life. There is an explicit need for programs and services that are comprehensive in scope and sensitive to the personal, interpersonal, and professional dynamics that contribute to the overall wellbeing of expats and their family members.”

Study findings also note that…

• Three times as many expatriate as U.S.-based workers expressed/endorsed feelings of being trapped/depressed.

• Twice as many expatriates as U.S.-based workers expressed/endorsed feelings of being anxious/nervous

The study used an online, scientifically based survey developed by the Research Institute of Chestnut Health Systems, the Gain Short Screener (GSS), to compare the mental health status of global expatriate employees to domestic U.S. non-expatriate employees at multi-national employers. The GSS measured self-reported responses in three primary areas: 1) internalizing (e.g., depression, anxiety, sleep issues, traumatic stress, suicide); 2) externalizing (e.g. attention deficit, hyperactivity, conduct and impulse control); and 3) substance abuse and dependence.

About Chestnut Global Partners

Chestnut Global Partners, LLC, is a wholly owned subsidiary of Chestnut Health Systems, Inc. (Bloomington, IL), a not-for-profit behavioral health organization based in Bloomington, Illinois. In addition to offering a full range of employee assistance and related workplace services to both domestic and multi-national companies, Chestnut Global Partners’ Division of Commercial Science helps providers and employers deploy scientific assessment technologies, outcome measures, and analytical methodologies so that EAPs, wellness companies, disease management entities, and purchasers can determine the effects or worth of programs. For additional information, call 309-820-3570, or visit www.chestnut.org/global/.

About The Truman Group

The Truman Group (St. Paul, MN) provides mental health care to English-speaking expatriates living overseas, providing psychological services to clients through live video connection. Our mental health providers are licensed, experienced practitioners who understand the demands that accompany living in a foreign country and culture. The Truman group works with individuals, couples and adolescents over the age of 14 and see patients living anywhere in the world outside the U.S., including China, Southeast Asia, Africa, South America, Eastern and Western Europe and the Middle East. For additional information, call 651-964-0224, or visit http://www.truman-group.com/.

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