Question and Answer: Economic Incentives

QUESTION (Ian Greaves, MD, Associate Professor, Division of Environmental Health Sciences, School of Public Health, University of Minnesota): For multi-national corporations that are implementing these innovative strategies, how to these translate into other countries, other cultures, other economic environments?

ANSWER, NICO PRONK: We’ve had a couple of discussions with companies that provide the health promotion, disease prevention, or health and productivity management type of services over in Europe. Basically, what happens is that – compared to the United States, where most of the time the discussion is in the context of health care costs – over in Europe, it’s much more in the context of productivity issues. But at the end of the day, the economic perspective actually works on both sides.

So I think – at least, speaking more globally – I think the interest is still there to look at health promotion, disease prevention, and health and productivity management type services as a solution to a cost or financial issue, but the driver may actually be different.

ANSWER. NIEBUHR: I’ll just add to that. We just in fact had a global HR conference in the last six weeks, and I had an opportunity, then, to speak with a lot of 3M’s HR leaders from about 60 larger subsidiaries around the world.

The general impression I have is that the productivity issues are a pervasive concern, and it’s driven in part by the – truly a global economy, driving more and more pressures around productivity. So even in those countries where they have a federal health system, this is very much in sync with some of the concerns.

The other is the global demographics in terms of labor pool and – again, for larger companies, at least, whether it’s a Microsoft or a 3M or a Motorola or a Johnson & Johnson, whoever it might be – we’re all going to be competing with each other, for knowledge workers, in particular. And to the extent that these types of programs are a way to express a value towards employees, it is seen as a potential differentiator as we compete going forward – at least in certain parts of the world where there’s going to be a labor shortage for the knowledge workers. So that’s starting to hit the radar screen in some instances.

Bottom line, employee engagement so that people are able to fully contribute out of their capability is a very, very broad value.