

# **Personal and Work Performance Outcomes of Employee Assistance Services**

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# Purpose of the Study

- Employee assistance services are commonly available to US workers (80% of workers have access to company sponsored EAPs)
- Little research on the outcomes for users of this kind of short term counseling that focuses on problem assessment, information, and referral
- EAP service by telephone is common, yet only a few studies have examined its effectiveness

# Study Methodology

- *Design:* Exploratory, non-experimental, one-group
- *Service Provider:* Optum<sup>®</sup> - Including over 1000 employers nationwide
- *Timeframe:* 1999
- *Variables:* Age, sex, clinical problem type, clinical severity, health and work outcomes
- *Data Collection Process:* Regular clinical system transactions and regular on-going standardized telephone surveys of random samples of clinical cases - each case was called within a week after completion of use of health service

# Sample

- Sample of 1,050 employees
- Callers to employee assistance counseling and referral service provided by employer or health plan
- 70% women and 30% men
- Age average 30 year (range 18-65)
- Assessed Clinical Problem Topic Areas:
  - 43% personal, relationship and daily living issues
  - 36% mental health issues
  - 10% physical health issues
  - 16% work issues

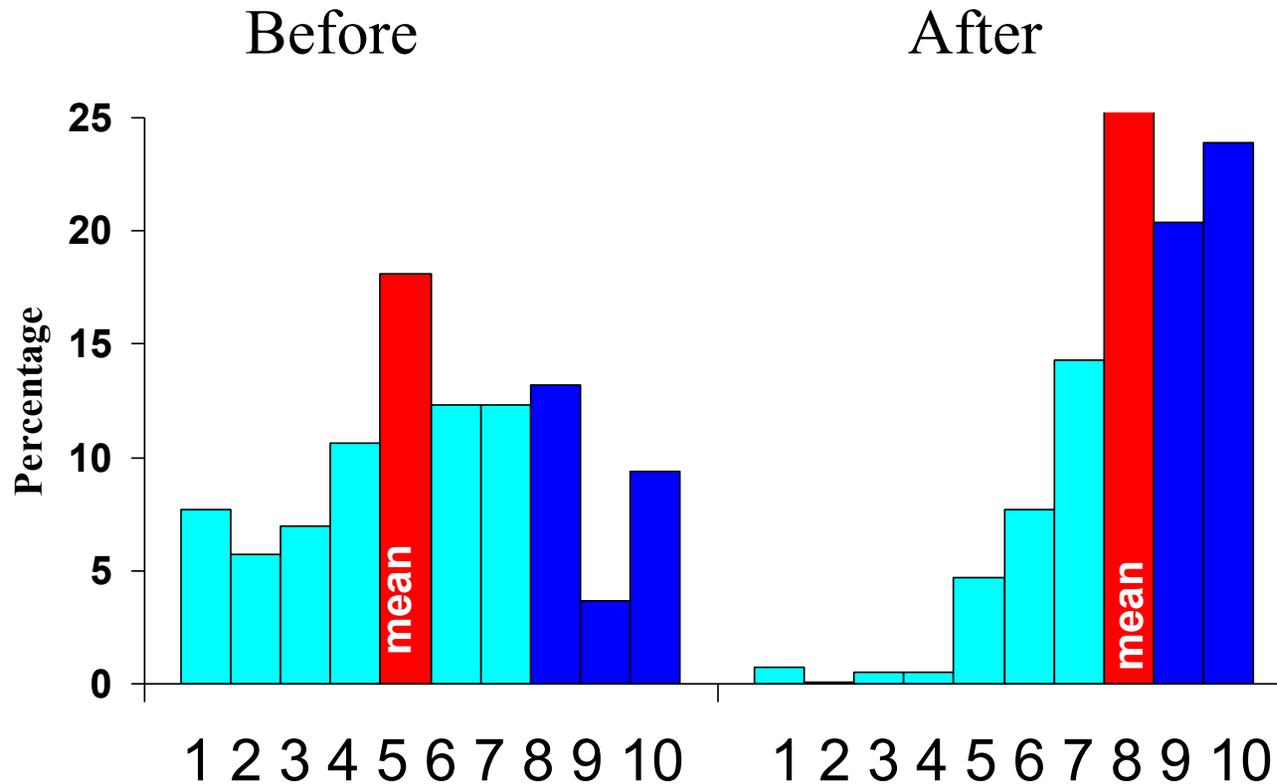
# Personal Outcomes

- 75% decreased stress
- 73% improved overall health & well-being
- 67% improved performance of routine daily activities
- 98% satisfied with service

# Level of Employee Productivity Before vs After Calling the Counselor Service (Survey $N = 1,050$ )

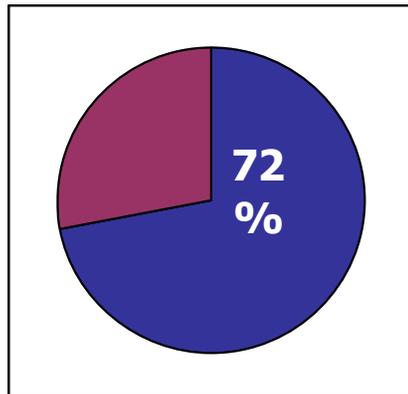
Before: “How productive were you when you first called Optum?”  
After: “How productive are you now? (after use of Optum)”

(1-10 Scale: 1 = the least productive you have ever been and 10 = the most productive you have ever been)”

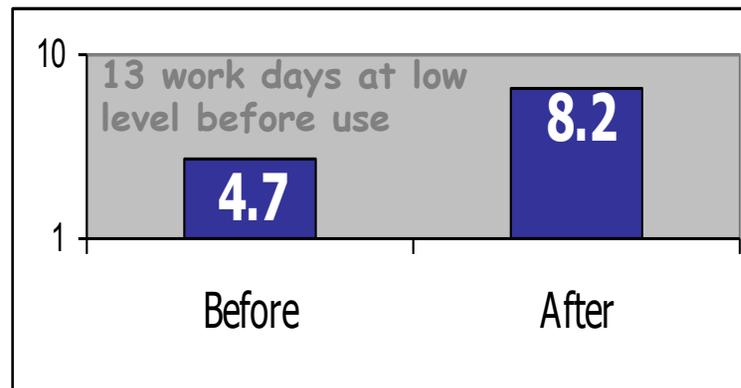


# Productivity Outcomes

**% who improved**

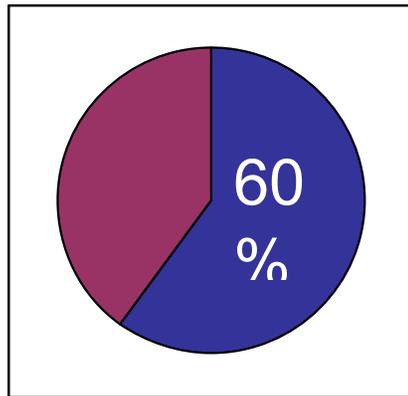


**Productivity Rating Scale:  
1 lowest to 10 highest**



Of the 72% of employees with improved work productivity after use of the service, the average gain in productivity was 43% (4.7 to 8.2; paired t-test  $p < .01$ ).

# Absenteeism Outcomes



**60% had avoided absenteeism**

**Average of 17 hours of lost work time avoided per case with effect**

Of the 60% of employees who reported being able to avoid taking time off from work because of use of the service, the average amount of time not lost was 17 hours.

# Correlational Findings

- Significant positive correlations were found between all of the personal and work outcomes ( $r = .09$  to  $.47$ ,  $p < .001$ )
- Few significant associations were found between the individual demographic and clinical factors and the personal and work outcomes after use of the counseling service

# Limitations and Strengths

## Limitations

- No control group of non-users of health services; natural change and causal factors of change untested
- One time assessments of outcomes
- Self-report data

## Strengths

- Real world data
- National sample
- Large sample size
- Standardized measures
- Third party data collection
- Employee self-report perspective

# Summary

- This is one of the first large-scale empirical studies of telephonic counseling services that are now available to most U.S. employees
- Most users of these kinds of services report positive outcomes in personal health and in workplace performance factors
- A study of the same EAP using data from the next year replicated the findings of this study