

## Employers may see smallest annual healthcare cost increase since 1999.

[Financial Week](#) (8/25, Bruno) reported, "Over the next 12 months, employers can expect to see another double-digit increase in healthcare spending." But, data from Aon Consulting indicates that "corporations will pay 10.6 percent more on healthcare in 2008, which is the smallest annual increase since 1999." Healthcare consultants attribute corporate wellness and disease management programs to the slight decrease in healthcare costs for employers. Such programs are now "standard practice at most companies -- numerous surveys show that anywhere from 70 percent to 90 percent of employers have at least one type of program in place." Still, wellness programs "actually add to a company's healthcare expenses at first," with some consultants estimating that "it takes at least two years for a company to see any real return on its investments in wellness." Ultimately, the success of wellness programs depends "on employees' participation -- and...whether participating leads workers to alter any unhealthy behaviors."