



Employer Update

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Helping employers integrate disease and care management

Welcome to the first quarterly report of DMAA's Employer Subcommittee. DMAA's employer members seek ways to control cost and disease trends through disease management and care coordination programs. This new report, exclusively focused on the needs of employers, will keep you updated on important DMAA activities and developments to assess the impact of chronic conditions on overall health care costs, productivity and employee satisfaction.

In 2006, the Subcommittee will develop an employer's tool kit on disease management; host an employer-focused summit in conjunction with the 2006 Disease Management Leadership Forum (DMLF); and provide a quarterly activities report to all DMAA members.

In addition, the Subcommittee seeks your input on future reports and activities. Please feel free to contact us if you have suggestions or questions.

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SHPS, DMAA Survey Employer Views on Disease Management Programs

While corporate response to disease management is generally positive, benefits managers—especially those in mid-size companies—say employee engagement, sustainability and acceptance by executives remain key challenges, a DMAA-sponsored focus group study shows.

The qualitative study, conducted by DMAA and SHPS Inc., tested a critical hypothesis: that alignment between the disease management community and larger employers is not as vigorous as it could be. The study also examined related questions, such as the extent to which disease management companies satisfy employer needs; how a company's culture contributes to or detracts from individual health behavior; and the potential to shift the focus of value assessments from cost to productivity and absenteeism.

For the study, a dozen benefits managers participated in evenly split focus groups—one for employers with more than 15,000 employees, another for mid-size firms of 1,500 to 15,000 employees. The group discussions took place over two days in summer 2005 at the Center for Health Transformation, in Washington, D.C.

Overall, the study found the alignment between the disease management community and employers not as vigorous as possible. While some large employers are getting much of what they require from the care management industry, a large majority need more, the study concluded. Also, benefits managers from mid-size firms trail their large company counterparts in comfort level with disease management programs,

indicating an area of focus for “savvy” disease management providers, the study's authors suggest.

Other key findings:

- Engaging employees in disease management poses a hurdle.
- Mid-size companies are less hopeful about the chances for successful interventions and behavioral change than large employers.
- Benefits managers at both levels generally gave high marks to the importance of managing chronic disease.
- While half of large employers have mature programs in place, only one mid-size employer had a full disease management program.
- Executive-level lack of trust in or understanding of disease management appeared to be more pervasive in mid-size firms.
- Areas of most concern to employers included a disease management program's ability to reach dependents and spouses; influence and sustain change over time; avoid intruding on the physician-patient relationship; and integrate with wellness and other management efforts.

The study also found that while return on investment remains an important consideration for many firms, the ability to control the health care cost trend is of greater importance. Employers find the tools with which to calculate the financial and medical impact of a program lacking, but acknowledge the difficulty calculating an accurate ROI.

Co-Chair Lisa Hu on DMAA Employer Subcommittee

DMAA: What has been the Subcommittee's focus?

HU: The subcommittee was a new addition to the DMAA last year and hosted a series of well-received audio conferences on employer experiences with DM.

DMAA: Are more employers implementing disease and care coordination programs?

HU: Yes! In fact, Hewitt's latest survey showed that more than 49 percent of surveyed clients have some DM initiatives, a significant increase from the reported 29 percent in 2003. Hewitt's survey also revealed an increased use of HRQ tools, wellness programs, such as health coaching, lifestyle modification programs, etc.

DMAA: What do employers want most in DM programs?

HU: Employers have a strong interest in measurement and understanding what is truly important to track on an ongoing basis, beyond just ROI. Also, some employers are beginning to move away from rigidly defined programs toward more holistically focused regimens, with a focus on targeting the health needs of each patient. Finally, employers today want to see their various vendors integrated to deliver the best care for their population.

DMAA: How does DMAA provide value to your clients?

HU: The outcomes project, the audio conference series, the dictionary and predictive modeling resources are all good tools for my employer clients to use as references and guidelines.

DMAA Developing Uniform Evaluation Methodology

DMAA continues work on an ambitious project to develop by year's end a uniform methodology for measuring and evaluating disease management and care coordination program outcomes.

The project's first phase involved a survey of the disease management community to collect data on current outcomes measurement techniques. Early results show significant areas of commonality among measurements. The results also show areas of divergence, which will serve as the focus of the project's next phase, during which the DMAA will solicit comment from all stakeholders, including employers, health plans, government and accrediting bodies. Important to note that accrediting and quality bodies, such as NCQA, URAC, JCAHO and AHRQ, have expressed support for the project and have pledged to participate in the stakeholder discussions.

DMAA plans to announce the methodology at the 2006 Disease Management Leadership Forum, Dec. 3-5, in Denver.

2006 DMLF to Add Special Programs for Obesity, Employers

"Raising the Bar: Delivering Health Care Value" will be the focus of the 2006 annual Disease Management Leadership Forum (DMLF). This year's forum will include more programming targeted to employer needs, including a one-day summit on Obesity Treatment and Prevention.

In addition, DMAA will host on Wednesday, December 6, a special Employer Summit to specifically address employers' health care cost and productivity concerns. Concurrent presentations will include case studies and outcomes for innovative programs.

Information is available at www.dmaa.org. We look forward to seeing you in Denver!

How to Get Involved

Contact DMAA Executive Director Tracey Moorhead at **(202) 737-5309** or tmoorhead@dmaa.org to learn about opportunities to participate in the work of the DMAA Employer Subcommittee.

