



Disease management programs growing

DISEASE MANAGEMENT has become an integral part of an employer's effort to protect the work force. These programs aim to insulate employees and employers from the impact cancer, diabetes, and other diseases can have on the company's productivity, medical costs, and more importantly, on the employees' lives.

In an effort to help increase productivity, reduce medical costs and improve employee health, Great-West Healthcare announced the expansion of their disease management programs to include an end stage renal disease – which is irreversible kidney failure – chronic pain and an enhanced maternity management program, according to a company-issued press release.

Here's a brief summary of each program:

The renal management program provides patients with one-on-one nursing, dietary regimens, and information and support for members with multiple conditions, such as diabetes or heart disease.

Chronic pain can cost the United States an estimated \$100 billion in lost productivity every year, according to the Joint Commission

on the Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations. It can impact an employee's ability to perform at work or obtain a job to begin with. Great-West's chronic pain management program assists employees and their families with understanding the disease and the depression that might accompany it.

The maternity program provides education to expecting mothers about caring for themselves during pregnancy. The program also tries to assess high-risk cases and give members proper attention and care as soon as possible.

Other Great-West disease management programs help members with asthma, diabetes, heart failure, coronary artery disease, emphysema, premature or sick newborns and cancer.

Employers that implement disease management programs might see a turnaround in productivity and employees might be grateful for the assistance programs such as these provide.

The program will become available Sept. 1. For more information, visit www.greatwest-healthcare.com.

Medical errors slashed

MEDICAL ERRORS can lead to duplicate services or billing errors. Simple oversights can range from an overcharged room to the wrong medication listed on a patient's chart. These mistakes can be harmful as well as expensive.

The errors and the financial havoc they might cause are the focus of a new partnership between BlueCross BlueShield of Tennessee and TennCare Bureau. The partnership hopes to revamp Tennessee's health care delivery by using technology to help reduce medical errors and even prevent fraud or abuse, according to a company-issued press release.

The new technology, called Community Connection, creates a patient health record that allows several providers treating the same patient to view the file on a secure Web site. The information viewed will include claims data, lab results, dispensed medications, immunization information, some Medicaid well-child screening documentation, and general information, such as the name and phone number of the patient's primary physician. In addition, Community Connection also meets all HIPAA and other privacy regulations.

The initial goal is to expand Shared Health services – a BlueCross subsidiary – to more than 2.8 million commercial customers of BlueCross BlueShield of Tennessee. Then, Shared Health will collaborate with other health technology initiatives to disperse the service throughout Tennessee.

"There has been a lot of attention lately devoted to the pivotal role of technology in providing more efficient, effective health care in our country," says Jana Skewes, president and CEO of Shared Health in the press release. "We believe Shared Health has the potential to position Tennessee as a successful model that will enable every state to benefit from this approach. It represents the future of health care."

This technology might help reduce the number of medical errors that impede the health delivery process and reduce any unnecessary charges the patient might incur.

For more information, visit www.bcbst.com.