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## **Dallas-Fort Worth Business Group on Health Studies Impact of Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease on Area Employees**

*Chronic and progressive lung disease affects 70 percent of the working age population*

**DALLAS – March 27, 2008** – To enhance the awareness and management of Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) for employees in the DFW area, the Dallas-Fort Worth Business Group on Health (DFWBGH), a non-profit employer coalition, conducted a study of Southwest Airlines' employees and found a strong need for increased awareness, diagnosis and management of COPD. According to the Centers for Disease Control, chronic conditions largely drive the cost of health care, accounting for 75 percent of all health care expenditures in the U.S. in 2001. The report is available on DFWBGH's Web site:

<http://www.dfwbgh.org/documents/COPD.pdf>.

COPD is a group of diseases, including emphysema and chronic bronchitis, characterized by airflow obstruction, shortness of breath, and chronic productive cough. This preventable and treatable chronic condition is responsible for more deaths in the U.S. than all other lung diseases combined and is the fourth leading cause of death. Boehringer Ingelheim Pharmaceuticals provided DFWBGH with financial support and assistance for this study.

“As with many chronic conditions, early diagnosis and treatment is the best way to manage COPD,” said Brent Wolfe, director, HRIS & Benefits Strategy, Southwest Airlines. “We participated in this study in part to increase employees' awareness and understanding of COPD to help them recognize and manage this condition.”

The program consisted of a Worksite Lung Health Screening of 360 Dallas-based Southwest Airlines' employees, distribution of COPD educational materials for screening participants, an analysis of blinded COPD-related claims data performed by Southwest's claims administrator UnitedHealthCare, and a group educational session for employees at Southwest Airlines.

“Worksite programs can help employees who are at risk for or may already have this progressive disease to better understand their treatment options and improve their skills for coping with the illness such as smoking cessation,” said Marianne Fazen, PhD, executive director of the DFWBGH. “The combined efforts of employers, health plans, practitioners and employees are key to prevention and care improvement strategies for this type of chronic condition.”

The program will be expanded to other employers. The Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas will be conducting a similar study in June in conjunction with World No Tobacco Day.

### **About the Dallas-Fort Worth Business Group on Health**

The Dallas-Fort Worth Business Group on Health is a 130-member coalition of Dallas and Fort Worth area employers committed to market-based health care reform. Activities include:

education programs on topics of key interest to employers; quality improvement initiatives providing comparative measures of quality, outcomes and care processes; relationship building initiatives; and legislative updates and analyses. Members include American Airlines, Bell Helicopter-Textron, Brinker International, EDS, Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas, JC Penney, Neiman Marcus, Sabre Holdings, Southwest Airlines, Texas Instruments, TXU, Verizon and others. A member of the National Business Coalition on Health, DFWBGH's goals are to empower employers to make informed health care purchasing decisions and to encourage health care providers to continuously improve their performance. [www.dfwbgh.org](http://www.dfwbgh.org).

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