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Partnership for Peak Healthcare Performance Research Shows Consumers' Lack of Involvement in Managing Their Health

Employees can benefit from worksite programs to help consumers make informed health care decisions

DALLAS – December 4, 2008 – While data indicates that area doctors are doing a good job and employers are making huge investments in the health of their employees, none of this matters if consumers don't take an active role in managing their health. According to research released today by the Dallas-Fort Worth Business Group on Health (DFWBGH), significant opportunities exist to improve consumer awareness of diabetes risk factors, prevention and appropriate care. The consumer research was conducted by the business group for its Partnership for Peak Healthcare Performance project. The full report is publicly available and can be accessed at the following URL:

<http://www.dfwbggh.org/documents/SurveyReport2008.pdf>.

Launched in 2007 by the non-profit DFWBGH, the Partnership for Peak Healthcare Performance (PPHP) was created to improve the quality of care for prevalent chronic illnesses and instill transparency into the local health care system. The PPHP is a collaborative initiative that brings together DFW area employers, physicians, health plans, and consumers in a cooperative effort. The goals of the initiative including measuring, improving, and publicly reporting physician performance in the treatment of prevalent chronic illnesses, improving patient compliance with recommended treatments, and empowering consumers to make informed decisions about health care. The initial focus of the PPHP is on diabetes care.

“Engaging consumers is one of the most important and challenging aspects of the Partnership project,” said Marianne Fazen, executive director of the DFWBGH. “Consumers and patients must be motivated to take ownership of their health, understand their options and make informed decisions about when and where to go for health care services.”

The online survey of employees from DFWBGH member companies was conducted by Crescendo Consulting Group to learn more about: consumer awareness of diabetes risk factors; consumer awareness of appropriate diabetes care; consumer awareness and attitudes concerning quality measures; and the likelihood of using physician performance information and other quality measures in making decisions about care. More than 1,500 DFW area employees participated in the survey. The research was funded by sanofi-aventis.

Key Survey findings

- **Diabetes Risk Factors:** Consumers are generally able to identify the most important risk factors for diabetes, such as being overweight and family history, but are less knowledgeable about other important risk factors, such as increased age, ethnic heritage, smoking, pregnancy, alcohol consumption and heart condition. Further, 39% of respondents doubted that diabetes could be prevented. Strong opportunities exist to distribute diabetes prevention, disease management, and community resource information.
- **Appropriate Diabetes Tests:** Nearly three out of four respondents (73%) know that HbA1C and blood sugar tests are important for managing diabetes, but far fewer are aware of other important tests, such as foot exams (43%), LDL cholesterol tests (40%) and eye exams (32%). This indicates an opportunity to educate consumers about appropriate diabetes tests as an indication of health care quality.
- **Chronic Disease Management:** A relatively low percentage of those surveyed responded that they “very actively” manage their chronic health conditions, which implies an opportunity to educate individuals with chronic health conditions about the need for personal research, office visit preparation, and use of work site programs.
- **Health Care Consumerism:** Respondents did not uniformly engage in behaviors that lead to productive office visits. Only one in five (20%) of respondents say that they always bring a list of questions to physician visits, and only 40% always bring a list of current prescriptions, over-the-counter medications and supplements to doctor visits.
- **Quality Care:** Respondents indicate a readiness and a willingness to receive and use valid comparative quality data in choosing a physician. Almost 90% of respondents said they would be interested in receiving reliable quality data on local doctors. However, only one in five respondents (21%) reported that they would select the more highly rated physician if required to choose between a doctor who is familiar and one who is more highly rated in quality reports.

“Based on the findings of this research, the PPHP will focus on developing and implementing worksite programs to further empower employee-consumers to make informed decisions about their health care,” said George Mones, director of human resources, City of Mesquite, whose employees participated in the survey.

The worksite demonstration programs will be rolled out at several DFWBGH member companies early next year to capitalize on the consumer engagement opportunities revealed by the survey.

About the Partnership for Peak Healthcare Performance

The Partnership for Peak Healthcare Performance involves over 3,000 primary care physicians in the DFW market and their patients through the provider networks of the five participating health plans - Aetna, Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Texas, CIGNA, Humana and UnitedHealthcare, and nearly 250,000 local employees of DFWBGH member companies and their family members.

About the Dallas-Fort Worth Business Group on Health

The Dallas-Fort Worth Business Group on Health is a 145-member coalition of Dallas and Fort Worth area employers and healthcare organizations committed to market-based health care reform. Members include American Airlines, Bell Helicopter-Textron, Brinker International, Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas, JC Penney, Neiman Marcus, Sabre Holdings, Southwest Airlines, and Texas Instruments. DFWBGH members spend nearly \$2.5 billion annually on employee health insurance in the DFW area alone. A member of the National Business Coalition on Health, DFWBGH's goals are to empower employers and their employees to make informed health care purchasing decisions and to encourage health care providers to continuously improve their performance. www.dfwbgh.org.

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