

# HealthMatters

## NEWS UPDATE

### Medication Compliance Is Key Concern, Survey Finds

12/1/2009 an Article by Stephen Miller

More U.S. employers are taking steps to improve their employees' health by making sure that they take their medicines as prescribed, a move that could stave off more serious and costly health consequences, according to findings by the National Pharmaceutical Council (NPC), a trade association.

A NPC-sponsored survey targeted U.S. employee benefit directors, medical directors and other health management professionals with health management and pharmacy benefit decision-making authority in large, self-insured corporations. The November 2009 report, [Employer Medication Compliance Initiatives](#), found that 89 percent of surveyed employers acknowledge the importance of medication compliance to employee health. Only preventive care and lifestyle behaviors were rated more highly.

"It's well documented that people with chronic diseases who take their medications as prescribed are healthier and more productive," said NPC President Dan Leonard. "Employers are actively taking steps to encourage medication compliance to help improve the health and well-being of employees and their families."

Medication compliance has long been acknowledged as a serious problem for the American health care system, costing billions of dollars in productivity, additional doctor visits, preventable hospitalizations and nursing home admissions, and even premature death, according to Leonard.

#### High-Risk Conditions

The survey found that conditions garnering high levels of employer attention are:

- Diabetes.
- High cholesterol
- Blood pressure
- Cardiovascular disease
- Congestive heart failure
- Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease

A large majority (95 percent) of surveyed employers said they are taking some sort of action to address compliance, and the trend is toward more sophisticated interventions that focus education and support resources on individuals who are not adhering to their prescribed treatments. Employers are often using their vendors to play a key role in analysis and intervention, with pharmacy benefit managers (PBMs) and employee benefit consultants cited most often.

<b>Employer's Top Priority Medication Compliance Initiatives</b> <i>(% of surveyed employers doing initiative and ranking it as a priority)</i>	
Promote awareness and offer general education.	62%
Implement targeted education, focused on specific priority conditions.	61%
Have the health plan, pharmacy benefit manager, or disease management vendor identify people not complying with medicines.	32%
Focus on medication compliance as part of a disease management program.	32%
Lower out-of-pocket costs for medications by reducing co-payments or co-insurance (value-based insurance design).	20%
Implement medication reminders (phone, e-mail, text, etc.).	17%
Offer employee incentives to encourage and reward medication compliance.	3%
<b>Source: National Pharmaceutical Council and The Benfield Group.</b>	

"Results of the survey are very consistent with broader trends we're seeing among large, self-insured employers," said Chuck Reynolds, principal of The Benfield Group, the firm NPC engaged to complete the research. "Employers believe they've just about reached the limit on what they can do with tactical benefit controls to manage costs and are focusing more and more on wellness, prevention and effective management of diseases and conditions."