

Essential Keys to Success for Consumer-Directed Health Plans

ANNOUNCER: Hello. Welcome to HealthSounds, conversations with healthcare innovators. Brought to you by the Healthcare Intelligence Network.

LAURA GREENE: This is Laura Greene for the Healthcare Intelligence Network. Today I'm speaking with Julie Bunde, director of product management at HealthPartners. Julie is presenting at HIN's webinar "Essential Keys to Success for Consumer-Directed Health Plans." Welcome and thanks for joining me today, Julie.

JULIE BUNDE, DIRECTOR OF PRODUCT MANAGEMENT AT HEALTHPARTNERS: Thank you my pleasure.

LAURA GREENE: To begin with, according to an October 2007 HealthPartners study that compared members in traditional plans to consumer-directed health plan members, the results showed that consumer-directed health plan members were younger and healthier. What do you think is drawing a younger population to HealthPartners consumer-driven health plans? What features could account for them being healthier?

JULIE BUNDE: Well I think it's a couple of things. Typically new plans do attract the younger and healthier people. They're looking for more affordable premiums and they're maybe less concerned with how to use the plan or how it works. They're a little bit more interested in the cost of the plan. So I think that's what draws the younger and healthier in the first couple of years. We are planning to update that study over the next

several months. And I think it'll be interesting to see how this has changed now that these plans have been around for a few more years. And I think in terms of features, really the concept of control over the money that they're spending, the ability to roll money over from year to year and accumulate funds for future healthcare costs and even retirement I think are the most attractive.

LAURA GREENE: Okay thank you Julie. According to a HealthPartners membership survey, consumer behavior can in part be attributed to the plan design. What kinds of changes are occurring in your members? Does the plan design affect their lifestyles?

JULIE BUNDE: I would say that we're definitely seeing some changes in behavior, members becoming more engaged just in general in their health and in their healthcare spending. And the plan design provides an economic incentive to engage. There are a lot of other things that are happening around the plan that are very important for health engagement. But the plan design itself with the account, the financial incentives, is causing them to take a look at their healthcare spending. And we are seeing that people are looking closer for cost in quality information. For example, we see a much higher utilization of our Web site for members in an account-based plan looking for cost in quality. And they're asking questions of our member services representatives about cost in quality and what providers are best to use, who are the most cost effective, what are the prices of services that they're looking to receive.

LAURA GREENE: Okay thanks Julie. Those are all the questions I have for you today. Thanks for being with us and we're looking forward to hearing from you during the webinar.

JULIE BUNDE: Thank you.

LAURA GREENE: This is Laura Greene for the Healthcare Intelligence Network.

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