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IF YOU DON'T THINK YOUR CLIENTS' EMPLOYEES NEED CANCER INSURANCE, THINK AGAIN OFFER CANCER INSURANCE AS AN OPTION ON CLIENTS' BENEFITS MENUS

About 12 years ago, I met Robin Shuff, co-owner of 'Tween Waters Inn in Captiva Island, Florida, and her husband, Jeff, general manager of the inn, through a benefits enrollment. Robin and Jeff weren't interested in cancer insurance because they were fairly well off financially and had pretty rich health and disability coverage. But after learning more about the cancer plan, they each bought a policy.

Long story short, a few years ago Robin and Jeff booked a trip to Australia. Before she left, Robin remembered her cancer policy had a wellness benefit, so she had a mammogram, filed a wellness claim and then left for their trip Down Under. When they got home, Robin was shocked to learn she did indeed have cancer. She's lucky that having the wellness benefit encouraged her to get a mammogram, which caught the cancer at an early stage.

After the cancer treatment, Robin told me over and over about the bills and out-of-pocket expenses that hit them. "Most people don't realize that being a patient makes you feel very guilty," says Robin, a cancer survivor. "Every time your family has to make a concession to your illness, you feel as if you're failing them. It's disheartening to be the wife and mom one minute and the burden the next. Plus, there's the worry about how you're going to pay for co-pays and deductibles on the hospital bills and other procedures. It was great not having to worry about that."

If you don't think working Americans need cancer insurance, think again. People you wouldn't usually consider as needing cancer insurance, such as CEOs and board chairpersons, will buy it. Years ago, brokers believed cancer insurance was unnecessary, but not any more. Now they understand that expenses associated with cancer treatment have grown, and employees need to insure against the possibility of contracting this long-term disease instead of trying to save up the funds to pay for it.

Statistics Underscore the Need for Cancer Insurance

The American Cancer Society says 68% of expenses associated with cancer come from indirect expenses not cov-

ered by health insurance. And, in the U.S., the lifetime risk of developing cancer is a little less than one in two for men and a little more than one in three for women.

Medical advances have resulted in increased survival rates for cancer, but with these advances come increased health care costs. Lengthy, expensive recovery periods can mean the loss of personal wages and an employee's ability to pay for care and treatment. Even with the most generous employer-provided medical and disability insurance plans, workers may need additional resources to help meet their financial needs.

People don't realize this until they're touched by cancer, either personally or through a family member or friend. I'm passionate about this particular coverage because my mother passed away from cancer and I saw firsthand what the bills did to my father. I also had a friend whose husband was diagnosed with a rare form of liver cancer. They used the benefits from their cancer policy to cover thousands of dollars in expenses they incurred traveling to the top center of excellence for this particular type of cancer.

Many individual cancer plans have wellness benefits that encourage policyholders to have cancer-screening tests. The goal is to detect cancer in an early stage when it's easier to treat.

Give Employees the Power to Choose

Some brokers limit the voluntary benefits menu for a client's initial enrollment to disability and life plans because they're concerned about overwhelming employees with too many choices. These days, you don't have to limit the voluntary menu. There are a lot more coverage gaps in health insurance now than in years past. So don't be afraid to add cancer insurance, too.

Remember, employees want choices. Some may have a family history of cancer and would like to have the coverage. Some may want to purchase disability coverage this year and add cancer next year, and some may want more life insurance. Having cancer insurance on the menu

along with disability and life plans puts the power of choice in the employees' hands. The more choices they have, the better chance you have of meeting a variety of individual needs.

I haven't had any clients object to putting cancer insurance on the menu. They realize employees want choices to meet their individual needs. If you have the right team to educate employees on their company's benefits, employees can get help to make the best decisions for them.

What Effective Benefits Education Looks Like

As we've said, every employee has different coverage needs. A professional benefits education team can work one-to-one with each employee to communicate your client's benefits and uncover the employee's most important need. The benefits representative should ask the right questions to find out an employee's real needs and let the needs determine what products to recommend. For example:

- An employee doesn't have adequate disability insurance to supplement his paycheck in the event of a serious accident or illness. In this situation, you wouldn't talk about cancer insurance first. Instead, disability insurance is his most pressing need, so that's what you'd talk about.
- An employee has adequate disability and life coverage and recently went through a difficult family cancer situation. That's the most important thing on her mind, so you'd talk about cancer insurance.
- A 50-year-old woman says her husband makes good money and pays all their bills. She's working for benefits, but they could get by without her income. However, she recognizes that a serious illness would tap into the retirement fund they've worked so hard for. She doesn't need more disability or life insurance, but she does worry about a serious illness like cancer and what it would do to their financial stability. If you don't have that on the menu, you won't be able to meet her needs. If you do, she'll walk away from her enrollment session feeling that she has covered all the bases.

Early Detection Is Key

- Regular screening examinations by a health care professional can result in the detection and removal of precancerous growths, as well as the diagnosis of cancers at an early stage when they are most treatable.
- Screening can prevent cancers of the cervix, colon and rectum by allowing removal of precancerous tissue before it becomes malignant.
- Screening can detect cancers of the breast, colon, rectum, cervix, prostate, oral cavity and skin at early stages. For most of these cancers, early detection has been proven to reduce mortality.
- Cancers that can be prevented or detected earlier by screening account for at least half of all new cancer cases.
- The five-year relative survival rate for these cancers is about 85%, a reflection of real reductions in mortality and earlier diagnosis because of screening.

Source: *2008 Cancer Facts & Figures*, American Cancer Society

And isn't that the goal—to have all employees walk away feeling that they understand their insurance choices and that they have their insurance bases covered? Cancer insurance is no longer just a nice-to-have. For a large population of employees, it's becoming a need-to-have. Offer a variety of voluntary products, including cancer plans, on your clients' benefits menus, and give employees the power to choose coverage to meet their needs. ■



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