

Getting Personal

Survey Shows Personalized
Activation Tools Boost
Trust, Satisfaction, Value

One consumer receives a general communication sent to everyone in her health plan discussing the benefits of preventive care. The other logs onto her plan's Web site and finds a personal message reminding her of a missed mammogram appointment. She also receives a monthly health statement with the mammogram reminder, and – if she calls customer service – the representative will share the same information over the phone.

The difference between the two experiences, said Meredith Baratz, vice president of market solutions for Definity Health, involves a personalized and tailored approach to involving consumers in their health care experience. And what a difference that personalization makes. “For example,” she said, “we know that women who receive and read those mammography messages from us have a 240 percent higher rate of mammography screenings than women who don’t read those messages.”

Additionally, such individualized outreach increases the ratings consumers give their benefits plans. According to a recent Definity Health survey of 500 >>



consumer-driven health plan (CDHP) members – half who had access to “activation” tools such as personalized health messaging and half who didn’t – those services deepen feelings of value and trust significantly. They also impact behavior. For instance, in addition to the increase in mammographies, such messaging resulted in a 100 percent rise in mail order pharmacy services among CDHP participants and a 31 percent increase in pill splitting.

“Activation services better support, engage and inform consumers as they navigate the health care system,” Baratz said. “Intuitively, it makes sense that this would have value to consumers, but it’s reaffirming to now have data to back that up. The fact that consumers are taking the information and acting on it illustrates the important role that activation programs play in centering health care on the consumer.”

In addition to the personalized health messaging, other consumer activation tools pioneered by Definity, a unit of UnitedHealth Group, include monthly health statements, which are designed to offer an easy-to-

understand outline of individuals’ health care transactions and opportunities for health improvement; and health coaching, which provides for deeper dialogues between consumers and health professionals who can help them explore treatment options and evidence-based care while equipping them with skills to monitor and change behaviors that impact their health.

AMONG THE FINDINGS OF THE SURVEY:

- 79 percent of consumers with access to activation services say their benefits plans help them get the care they need, compared to 67 percent without that access;
- 71 percent of consumers with activation services feel their plans help them understand their health care options, compared to 57 percent without;
- 67 percent of consumers with activation services say their plans help them save money on health care, compared to 51 percent without;
- 73 percent of consumers with activation services believe their plans give them help making wise health care decisions, compared to 57 percent without.

The study also found that consumers’ engagement in health decisions deepens over time. Re-enrollees in CDHPs are more likely than new members to answer positively to questions about being aware of health costs or being involved in decisions about lifestyle and health care.

“We now have for the first time evidence that the investment we have made in mining data to provide people with personally relevant information at the point of need does, in fact, make a positive difference as it relates not only to their behavior in their purchases of health care, but also their satisfaction and feelings of value,” said Definity CEO Kyle Roling, noting that such results are one reason that Definity’s activation services will start to be expanded across UnitedHealth Group businesses in 2006. “We certainly have more work to do in terms of quantifying behavior changes specifically attributable to this messaging, but these initial findings are very positive and encouraging.” ■

Better Information, Better Decisions >>

Individuals enrolled in a CDHP who have access to activation services report that their health benefits plans provide better access to information on health care options, costs and healthy lifestyle choices, which helps them make wiser medical decisions, according to a recent Definity Health survey of 500 consumer-driven health plan members.

