

Friday, September 26, 2008

Sources Say

What the experts say

What do you think can be done to help reduce health care costs for businesses and individuals?

Washington Business Journal

"Preliminary results from Mercer's 2008 National Survey of Employer-**Sponsored Health Plans** indicate 59 percent of employers intend to increase employee cost-share requirements — higher out-of-pocket costs when care is obtained and/or increased payroll deductions. Almost 20 percent intend to add a consumer-directed health plan, typically designed to cost less. CDHPs have greater financial exposure for employees but provide tools to help employees manage health care expenses. Employers continue to communicate the importance of preventive care and managing chronic disease conditions, since failing to do so can result in higher costs in the future."

-- *George Lane, principal, Mercer LLC*

"Businesses should ban smoking in and near their facility. They should offer smoking-cessation programs. Office cafeterias should offer heart-healthy choices. Gyms on the premises or reduced-rate memberships would encourage more exercise. At a recent conference, the speaker indicated the rate of heart disease decreased so much in his California community that they had to reduce their interventional cardiologists from four to one. One reason was the smoking ban and lack of social acceptance to smoking. The other was the lack of obesity. These two factors alone resulted in a 50 percent reduction in heart disease."

-- *Dr. Patricia Davidson, Cardiologist, Washington Hospital Center*

"It is important to focus on wellness and preventative medicine. These types of methods are offered by doctors of naturopathy, herbalists, homeopaths, nutritional consultants, holistic practitioners and other types of natural health care practitioners. The practitioner evaluates subtle imbalances within the body and then recommends a natural health care treatment plan. The treatment may include nutritional guidance, natural remedies, supplements, bodywork, exercises, guided imagery or stress-management techniques. Some businesses have offered employee appreciation days or health fairs to staff members."

-- *Dr. Victoria Goldsten, director, Washington Institute of Natural Medicine*

"The best way to reduce health care costs is to improve the health of your staff. As a major employer and the first hospital in the District with a tobacco-free environment, Providence encourages healthy lifestyle choices for all its associates and medical/dental staff through free smoking-cessation classes, fitness classes and programs to promote healthy eating and living options, and organized participation in charitable walk/runs."

-- *Paul Grenaldo, chief operating officer, Providence Hospital*

"The greatest improvement in building a cost-effective, high-quality system will be to strengthen our deteriorating primary care provider network. Sophisticated studies show that one of the major differences between our system and those of other more cost-effective countries is that far less of our care is provided by primary care physicians. Other studies show that those areas in our country where the per-patient costs are lowest have the highest concentration of primary care doctors and those with the most specialists have the highest cost. Again, the quality of care is equal or better in the high primary care areas."

-- *Dr. Thomas Connally, medical director, Arlington Free Clinic*