

**Savannah Business Group on Health Care Cost Management (Georgia)  
Case Study - Improving the Health of Our Community  
November 3, 2005**

**Executive Summary**

The Savannah Business Group as part of its approach to improving health status and addressing improved support for those with chronic conditions, implemented a health risk appraisal program with mentoring and education support for the individual participant based upon their results and needs. One of the comprehensive programs focuses on cardiac care and is in its sixth year of use. Results show that improvements in measures of cholesterol levels, weight loss, and blood pressure control. The project shows that comprehensive prevention and self management programs can be very effective when they include components to recognize individual needs and readiness to change.

**Background**

*About the Coalition.* Savannah Business Group on Health Care Cost Management (SBG), incorporated in 1982, is a non profit corporation with regional business, industry, and government members. The mission of SBG is to improve the health of the community. Activities have focused on the introduction and implementation of innovative cost saving concepts and value purchasing. The coalition has 20 employer members representing 17,000 employees and 45,000 covered lives.

*About the Project.* SBG has been participating in health risk assessments but was interested in a program that went beyond identification of at risk employees. They searched for a program that maintained the current program features but expanded to a clinical intervention. The program must also demonstrate effective in diverse populations—age, ethnicity, education, gender, multiple risk factors—as well as in delivery alternatives by phone and internet. Lifestyle and prevention for those at risk (smoking, overweight, etc.) as well as improvement in management for those with hypertension, hyperlipidemia, and elevated blood glucose levels/diabetes to address primary and secondary prevention were goals for SBG.

**Program Description**

*Project Description.* The Savannah Business Group is addressing the cost and effectiveness of cardiac care with its intervention program is in its sixth year of operations managed by Intervent USA. The comprehensive program includes these key features:

- Health risk appraisal for all employees as one of the mechanisms to engage consumers and to identify at risk individuals. The HRA is available on line.
- The computerized HRA is used as a baseline evaluation with generation of chronic disease risk reduction goals and an action plan for achieving these goals--specific to the responses that individual has provided to the HRA. The program includes “readiness to change” assessment to provide further customization.
- The guided—through mentor assisted or one-on-one coaching as two potential options as well as 12 week programs—implementation of the lifestyle, component

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- of the action plan, including exercise training, correct nutrition, weight management, smoking cessation, stress management, and other self-care/prevention interventions.
- Identification of medical conditions that may require further evaluation or treatment and referral to physicians as indicated.
  - Integration with a participant's usual medical care through the formation and use of physician networks
  - Automated progress reports and participant tracking to enhance compliance

With the automation of these features, the data from the program is able to be used for analysis and benchmarking program results. SBG has a wellness coordinator on staff as a shared resource for their employer members.

Basically, the program works as follows:

1. Each employer endorses the program and customizes for their population as appropriate for internal communications and any unique issues
2. Employer promotes the program as part of the health plan and worksite support for employee health care
3. Employees voluntarily participate in the HRA component as the baseline assessment. The assessment includes questions on medical history, lifestyle and health habits, chronic conditions or existing medical problems, and 8 of the SF36 questions. The HRA is administered as a Web based tool, in person, or on the phone with a trained counselor. The also includes "readiness to change" assessment questions.
4. Employees receive their results from the HRA.
5. Employees participate in goal setting based on their HRA results with the help of a trained counselor.
6. These goals are translated to a specific action plan for each participant. The interventions are evidence based, guided implementation of individualized and comprehensive exercise/physical activity, nutrition, weight management, smoking cessation, stress management, and other behavior change and self care programs. Coaching and mentoring are options the participant may choose with either "high tech" or "high touch". Goals are based upon each individual's readiness to change, clinical circumstances, personal preferences, and available resources.
7. Follow up and monitoring including progress reports and evaluation for each participant.
8. Employers receive aggregate participation and outcome assessment reports.

### **Results and Impact**

Improvements were seen in the average change in eight measurable risk factors:

- Systolic blood pressure reduced 17mm Hg
- Diastolic blood pressure reduced 10mm Hg
- Total cholesterol reduced 26 mg/dl
- LDL cholesterol reduced 13 mg/dl
- HD cholesterol increased 5 mg/dl

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- Triglycerides decreased 57 mg/dl
- Weight decrease 3 pounds
- Blood glucose decrease 27 mg/dl

These improvements translate to a collective reduction of participant risk of developing coronary heart disease in the next 10 years by 15.7%. Employees who were at the highest risk for heart disease at program entry have reduced their risk for developing coronary heart disease in the next 10 years by 28.2 percent.

### **What's In It for Me?**

The innovative program has furthered the mission of the Coalition and benefiting each employer member with increased value, participating employees with improved health status, and the provider practices with tools and improved systems of care based on guidelines. The collective purchasing approach and collaboration by the providers with the purchasers benefits the community as a whole.

### **Strategies for Success**

This program has been built over a period of time with measurement of successes along the way to reinforce its value to both employers and participating employees and providers. The collaborative approach, engagement with providers in both selection of and use of the measures have been influential in its success along with the continued support from the supplier—Invervent.

### **References**

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