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Research Indicates Participants in Incentive-Based Health Promotion Programs Have Lower Healthcare Costs

Study of nearly 950,000 members shows decreased hospitalization costs, length of stay and admissions for those engaged in a comprehensive wellness program

CHICAGO – January 20, 2010 – According to a study published in the January/February issue of the [American Journal of Health Promotion](#), a peer-reviewed journal devoted to health promotion, health plan members who participated in fitness-related activities within an incentive-based health insurance wellness program had significantly lower health care costs.

The study examined the medical claims data over one year of 948,974 adult members of South Africa's largest private insurer, Discovery Health. Of these members, more than 62 percent (591,134) registered for [Vitality™](#), an incentive and reward-based health promotion program offered by Discovery Health to its members. In the United States, the health improvement program is offered independently by [The Vitality Group](#), a member of Discovery Holdings Limited.

"Employers continue to struggle with increasing healthcare costs and the growing prevalence of chronic diseases, but more and more are turning to population health management programs as a solution," said [Arthur C. Carlos](#), CEO of The Vitality Group. "Incentive-based wellness programs are designed to change behaviors and improve the health of their members. By improving health in a sustainable way, it is possible to reduce costs over the long-term."

The findings: hospital cost savings and shorter stays

Engagement in an incentive-based wellness program was associated with lower healthcare costs. For those members who were admitted to a hospital, the length of stay and frequency of admission was significantly less for participants who were active in fitness-related activities.

The adult insured members were grouped based on registration and the level of engagement in the Vitality health promotion program: not registered (37.5 percent), registered but not active in any health promotion activity (21.9 percent), low engagement (30.9 percent) and high engagement (9.5 percent). Most activities (i.e. fitness-related, assessment and screening, healthy choices and health knowledge) and outcomes were validated. Hospitalization costs were analyzed per

member in the various groups and the research indicates that not only were costs per member decreased based on activity level, but the same pattern was demonstrated for admission rates.

The study was led by Deepak N. Patel, MD, Mmed, University of Cape Town and senior clinical specialist, Discovery Health, and Estelle V. Lambert, PhD, UCT/MRC Research Unit for Exercise Science and Sports Medicine, Department of Human Biology, UCT School of Health Sciences, University of Cape Town.

“The rise in incidence of chronic disease and associated healthcare costs is unsustainable,” said Dr. Patel. “As researchers, it is critical we evaluate and identify solutions to mitigate this trend. Although more research will need to be done, this study is encouraging as it shows a positive correlation between engagement in health promotion and lower healthcare costs.”

About The Vitality Group

The Vitality Group is a member of Discovery Holdings Limited, a leading international financial services institution founded on the principles of consumer engagement and wellness and the originator of the Vitality health promotion program. Vitality wellness programs serve more than 1.5 million members in companies in a wide range of sizes and industry categories, improving individuals’ health and well-being as well as employers’ and health plans’ bottom lines. Early adopters in the United States include some of America’s most forward-thinking companies. They join global organizations in the United Kingdom and South Africa who together are proving the effectiveness of the Vitality health enhancement solution in reducing healthcare costs. www.thevitalitygroup.com