

Harvard Professors Say Health Assessments Can Positively Influence Some People's Health Behavior, Especially When Linked to Health Coaching and Other Programs

BLOOMFIELD, Conn., October 27, 2009 - With open enrollment now underway at many companies, employees will be making decisions about their health care coverage for 2010. As part of their health plan enrollment, they may be asked to complete a health questionnaire known as a health assessment. These health assessments can help people focus on their health status, identify areas for health improvement, and prompt them to take advantage of health and wellness programs, such as health coaching offered online or by phone that can help them achieve their health goals.

An [article](#) authored by two Harvard professors published in the September/October 2009 issue of *Health Affairs* magazine¹ examines data from Cigna (NYSE:CI) for the period January 2004 through June 2006 and reports that completing a health assessment can positively influence some health behaviors. For example, the article reports that people completing an assessment visited the doctor more often, filled more prescriptions and had more cervical cancer screenings than those who didn't complete an assessment. Women, healthier people and people enrolled in consumer-driven health plans were most likely to complete an assessment.

"This is important research that identifies the ways health assessments are making a difference," said Dr. David Ferriss, national medical director for clinical program development at Cigna. "Even more significantly, it also points the way forward for employers and health plans as they take steps to increase the impact and effectiveness of workplace health and wellness programs."

The authors conclude that while completing a health assessment may have some influence on health behaviors, the potential to affect behavior may be greater if there is a financial incentive for completing the assessment, if the assessment is directly linked to health coaching or disease management programs, or if financial incentives are provided for achieving risk reductions.

In each of the areas cited by the authors Cigna is already taking the lead. In 2008 Cigna began using a [new health assessment](#) powered by analytics from the University of Michigan Health Management Research Center under an exclusive agreement. The health assessment is linked to online health coaching for nutrition, sleep, stress and physical activity, and individuals are immediately offered this coaching if analysis of their health assessment indicates it may benefit them. Individuals can also access health coaching over the phone if their employer chooses this service as part of its benefits plan.

Some people might also be contacted to participate in a disease management program based on an analysis of their health assessment.

In addition, under a Cigna health plan, employers can opt to include the [Cigna Incentive Points Program](#) as part of their benefits package. Cigna offers financial incentives for people who complete the health assessment, as well as incentives for people who enroll in a tobacco cessation, weight management or stress management program.

Click on this link to read the *Health Affairs* article: http://www.cigna.com/section_display.cfm?section_id=14

Then click on "Health Risk Appraisals: How much do they influence employee behavior?"

About Cigna

Cigna (NYSE:CI), a global health service company, is dedicated to helping people improve their health, well-being and sense of security. Cigna Corporation's operating subsidiaries provide an integrated suite of medical, dental, behavioral health, pharmacy and vision care benefits, as well as group life, accident and disability insurance, to approximately 46 million people throughout the United States and around the world. To learn more about Cigna, visit www.cigna.com. To sign up for email alerts or an RSS feed of company news, log on to http://www.cigna.com/section_display.cfm?section_id=18.

1 "Health Risk Appraisals: How Much Do They Influence Employees' Health Behavior?" by Haiden A. Huskamp and Meredith B. Rosenthal, Health Affairs, September/October 2009, pages 1532 - 1540.