



TEXAS
HEALTH STRATEGY PROJECT
Analyze ▶ Understand ▶ Engage

Dallas-Fort Worth Business Group on Health THSP Demonstration Project Employer Case Study: **BRINKER INTERNATIONAL, INC.**

DFWBGH is excited to share the impressive results of our 3-year **Texas Health Strategy Project** (THSP), completed in 2013.

Seven pace-setting DFWBGH employers learned and applied innovative approaches to value-based benefits design and population health management through this demonstration project. THSP involved:

- A structured, data-driven approach to identify health priorities, determine targeted interventions, and measure results.
- An expanded definition of value-based benefits design.
- Group learning, peer-to-peer networking and collaboration
 - Creating an environment of creativity, idea generation and mutual accountability;
 - Leading to creative solutions and enhancements to existing programs to address employees' health needs.

Participating Employers

- *Brinker International, Inc.*
- *City of McKinney*
- *City of Mesquite*
- *Energy Future Holdings*
- *Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas*
- *Haggar Clothing Co.*
- *Interstate Batteries, Inc.*

The THSP experience delivered positive results for participating employers, as documented in seven individual THSP Employer Case Studies.

The Brinker International Case Study follows.

To learn more about this highly successful demonstration project, read the [THSP Project Report](#) and find links to the case studies at www.dfwbgh.org.

THSP was sponsored by the Dallas-Fort Worth Business Group on Health and the National Business Coalition on Health with support from Pfizer, Inc.



Restaurant company partners with providers to serve up innovative and cost saving approaches to weight loss and treating musculoskeletal conditions.

About Brinker International

One of the largest casual dining restaurant companies in the world, Brinker International serves more than one million guests every day. Brinker brands include: Chili's Grill & Bar and Maggiano's Little Italy. Senior management at Brinker fosters a culture of health. The headquarters campus has walking trails, employees are encouraged to use stairwells, and the company hosts field days and other exercise-based activities. Brinker projects a caring attitude toward employees and their families, but with restaurant employees so widely disbursed, benefits communication and wellness programming is difficult in field locations.

Company Statistics / Demographics

Worldwide Employees	100,000 (75,000 in the US)
Headquarters Location	Dallas, TX
Number of Locations	1,500+ restaurants in 32 countries and two territories
Total Number of Covered Lives	13,193 (6,206 employees / 6,984 dependents)
Average Employee Age	32 years
Average Tenure	6 years
Benefit Type	Self insured; high deductible health plan

For the subset of Brinker employees who participate in Brinker's benefit plan, a full replacement high deductible health plan was implemented in 2011 with two levels of deductibles and accompanying health reimbursement accounts. To facilitate the transition, employee contributions were reduced and Brinker contracted the services of a care advocacy vendor partner (Compass) to help employees find quality care at lower prices.

Data drives decisions

Population Health

- While the total population at Brinker is relatively young, data showed that Brinker employees who participate in the health plan had a high incidence of cardio metabolic risk factors including obesity and high blood pressure. Trials of an onsite weight reduction program at headquarters called **Naturally Slim**[®] showed promise for reducing risk, but were limited in scope and difficult to replicate in the field in restaurant settings.
 - Goal – Reduce the risk status of participants as measured by changes in biometrics before and after participation in the Naturally Slim program.
 - Intervention – **Prevention through Benefit Design and Engagement** – Increase the number of employees who enroll in and complete Naturally Slim.
- The number one condition driving health care spending for Brinker was "musculoskeletal condition," and the associated productivity and lost time impact added to the cost burden (musculoskeletal was one of the top five reasons given for LTD).
 - Goal – Improve patient outcomes and reduce need for more costly and invasive care for musculoskeletal problems.
 - Intervention – **Outcomes Improvement through Engagement** – steer employees to evidence-based care model that provides effective, cost efficient care for musculoskeletal problems.

Implementing value based interventions

Population Health

- Naturally Slim – Starting in 2008 Brinker periodically offered headquarters employees a program called Naturally Slim which consisted of weekly on-site classes to retrain the participant's relationship with food over the 10-week program. Those completing the program qualified for reduced co-pays

(50%) on medications for diabetes, hypertension and cholesterol. Although the program had been successful, Brinker's widely dispersed employee population made it difficult to offer the program beyond headquarters.

- Brinker worked with its vendor to create and beta test an online version in 2010, consisting of a series of weekly online informative videos over a 10 week period.
 - Reached a broader group of employees (enrollees in 26 states).
 - Online format lowered the cost of delivering the program.
 - Program was self-paced and could include dependents.
- In 2012 a \$150 incentive was added to increase participation (paid into employee's wellness account on completion). Employee paid an upfront enrollment fee of \$50.
 - Employees had to participate 8 of 10 weeks and take a pre-and post-program screening to qualify for the incentive.
- Musculoskeletal Pilot – Brinker contracted with Airrosti to provide a limited time onsite program that performed myofascial release and joint mobilization techniques to improve function and range of motion, followed up with individualized care programs.
 - Brinker used Compass (care advocacy partner) to guide patients with targeted conditions to Airrosti versus other treatment options. No other incentives were offered.

Successes

Naturally Slim®

- Changes in clinical values measured before and after participation in the program varied from cohort to cohort, and were influenced by the initial risk profile of those opting into the program. However the percent of participants moving from high Metabolic Syndrome risk (3+ risk factors) to low (2 or less factors) ranged from 30% to 50% for the online program, and average weight loss ranged from 10 to 13 pounds.

Brinker - Naturally Slim Results				
Metric	Spring 2008 *	Fall, 2008 *	2010 **	2012**
Participation Rates				
Number of participants – live classes	94	44	11	-
Number of Participants – on-line class	21	11	258	85
Complete at least 8 of 10 Naturally Slim Classes	61.2%	82.1%	47.3%	62.0%
Complete Pre and Post Screening	66.0%	78.6%	43.2%	54.0%
Valid Pre and Post Screening Data	50.0%	71.4%	27.9%	45.0%
Clinical Values (from pre & post biometric screening)				
% Metabolic Syndrome Reduction (3+ to 2 or less)	60%	64%	50%	30%
% migrated from BMI ≥ 30 to less than 30 BMI	24.1%	12.5%	12.0%	9.0%
Average Weight Loss	14.8	9.9	12.8	10.3

**Classes were instructor led on-site; plus small on-line pilots*
***Classes were internet based and self-paced*

- For the 2012 program, Brinker's consultant modeled an estimated 3-year cumulative claims savings (medical, workers comp and lost work days) of \$65,410 and ROI of 4.4:1 based on predicted savings from avoidance of stroke and coronary events for participants moving from the Metabolic Syndrome to Non-Metabolic Syndrome category.

Musculoskeletal Pilot

- Using entry and exit surveys, Airrosti reported success in relieving symptoms, and averting more expensive and invasive treatments.
- For the 19 patients treated in the pilot program, Airrosti estimated saving \$163,400 versus the cost of traditional treatment.

- The average Airrosti cost of \$900 per case was less than the typical cost of an MRI alone.
- Additional savings from four avoided surgeries could range from \$9,300 to \$18,600 per case, estimated based on the number of patients reporting that they had been previously recommended for surgery.

Airrosti Pilot Success (patient survey)	Percent Reporting
Resolved injury/condition	88%
Eliminated/reduced related meditations	89%
Prevented need for further treatment	94%
4 surgeries recommended during “traditional treatment” prior to receiving treatment with Airrosti® were prevented.	

Comparing Airrosti Treatment to Traditional Treatment		
(19 patients treated)	Airrosti	Traditional*
Avg # Visits	4.0	10.4
Duration in weeks	3.2	45.0
Est. Lost Work Hrs	16	49
Avg cost per case	\$900	\$9,498
Total cost all cases	\$17,100	\$180,468
* Estimates based on regional data base of 30 million claims		

- Challenges
 - Brinker is still researching meaningful incentives for using Airrosti under the HDHP since treatment expenses apply to the deductible.
 - Airrosti is not currently available nationwide, complicating efforts to expand the program outside of DFW.

Key learnings & greatest challenges

- Integration of data from different sources (even if data gaps exist) enhanced data analysis and reporting, helped develop a more complete picture of population health priorities and cost drivers, and pointed to areas needing more study and analysis.
- Evaluation planning and development of the scorecard metrics up front added rigor to benefits program planning and facilitated program evaluation.
- Data mapping illuminated interfaces where vendor collaboration and data sharing could be leveraged to provide better health management (for instance in diabetes care).
- Expanding the health management team resulted in a higher functioning team, with better diversity of skills and strengths bringing more resources to bear on health and wellness initiatives.

Future goals

- Enhance vendor value by building effective incentives for employees to use Airrosti, while further leveraging the Compass care advocacy program to guide certain musculoskeletal cases to Airrosti.
- High employee turnover lessens the impact of Compass’ programs to increase uptake of preventive care, so work with Compass to tailor its Health Prompt product to focus on care advocacy for specific diagnosis with more immediate health impacts such as diabetes.
- Explore opportunities to expand the Airrosti on-campus (headquarters) presence to engage employees in educational programs (lunch and learn) and treatment.
- Explore how to make the Airrosti approach available outside the DFW area.
- Continue to build on solid base of employees completing Naturally Slim® on-line.