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DFW Value-Driven Health Care Collaborative Launched for Treatment of Diabetes

80% of area primary care physicians involved

DALLAS – July 17, 2007 – To improve the quality and efficiency of outpatient care for prevalent chronic illnesses, today the Dallas-Fort Worth Business Group on Health (DFWBGH) announced the DFW Value-Driven Health Care Collaborative. A new community-wide health care improvement initiative, the Collaborative will initially focus on diabetes, as more than seven percent of residents throughout the DFW Metroplex have been told they have diabetes and the number continues to grow.

The multi-stakeholder project has been in the planning stages for nearly a year and involves a collaboration of physicians, employers, health plans and consumers. The three-year effort includes physician performance measurement, quality improvement, public reporting and consumer engagement and empowerment.

“This collaboration is unique as we are engaging a significant number of area physicians as well as health care consumers,” said Brent Wolfe, director, HRIS & Benefits Strategy for Southwest Airlines, a board member of the business group and chair of the Collaborative’s Leadership Team. “We are providing important educational information and useful tools for our employees and their families to be more involved in their care to keep them on track with what their physicians are prescribing. By engaging all of these parties in the process, we believe we will have healthier employees with an improved quality of life, which translates to increased productivity and cost savings for employers.”

This program aligns with the Four Cornerstones of the Bush Administration’s value-driven health care initiative outlined in the August 2006 Executive Order on health transparency: interoperable health information technology (HIT), price and quality transparency and incentives for high-value health care. At a March meeting in Dallas with senior executives from leading business and health organizations, Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services, Michael Leavitt, called on DFW area employers to promote the Four Cornerstones by signing a purchaser statement of support for the Executive Order.

Community-wide collaboration

The success or failure of initiatives such as the DFW Value-Driven Health Care Collaborative is largely dependent on physician involvement. This effort will reach approximately 80 percent of the nearly 4,100 primary care physicians in the DFW market through the provider networks of the five participating health plans – Aetna, Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Texas, Cigna, Humana and UnitedHealthcare. Some of the largest practices in the area are involved in the project’s leadership team and advisory councils, including the Health Texas Physician Network and Medical Edge. Additionally, the health plans’ major customers are made up of large DFW employers and DFWBGH members, many of which are participating in this initiative, including

American Airlines, Brinker International, the Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas, JC Penney Company, Sabre Holdings and Southwest Airlines.

“We’ve successfully implemented other health care quality improvement programs, such as AIM for Excellence (program information available at www.dfwbgh.org), by engaging employers, health care providers, and health plans,” said Marianne Fazen, executive director of DFWBGH. “This latest effort is unique in that it combines the resources of all key stakeholders to put significant focus on engaging health care consumers, including patients with diabetes, to increase awareness of and compliance with recommended care for diabetes.”

Performance measures and improvement

Key program components include the use of performance measures using nationally recognized and endorsed outpatient care standards for the treatment of diabetes, and public reporting of the results. According to a recent report issued by DFWBGH on the prevalence, costs and quality of care for Texans with Type 2 diabetes (Texas Type 2 Diabetes Report available at www.dfwbgh.org), Texas lags the nation in the percentage of diabetes patients receiving recommended services, such as blood tests for glucose, Hemoglobin A1C and cholesterol, eye exams and urine tests for glucose. Through this collaborative initiative, local physicians and employers have a significant opportunity to better serve the needs of diabetes patients in this community.

Public reporting

It’s widely believed that what gets measured and reported gets improved. Physician performance results for this program will be made readily available in a regional multi-plan diabetes quality report card to consumers at all levels and to the physicians themselves.

Consumer engagement

To engage and empower consumers and reach as many DFW area patients with diabetes as possible, including the underserved and vulnerable populations, the DFW Value-Driven Health Care Collaborative includes worksite interventions for employees of DFWBGH member companies and patients of Parkland’s Community-Oriented Primary Care clinics. Risk assessments and targeted education sessions will provide consumers with vital prevention and health care information.

About the Dallas-Fort Worth Business Group on Health

The Dallas-Fort Worth Business Group on Health is a 130-member coalition of Dallas and Fort Worth area employers committed to market-based health care reform. Activities include: education programs on topics of key interest to employers; quality improvement initiatives providing comparative measures of quality, outcomes and care processes; relationship building initiatives; and legislative updates and analyses. Members include American Airlines, Bell Helicopter-Textron, Brinker International, EDS, Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas, JC Penney, Neiman Marcus, Sabre Holdings, Southwest Airlines, Texas Instruments, TXU, Verizon and others. A member of the National Business Coalition on Health, DFWBGH’s goals are to empower employers to make informed health care purchasing decisions and to encourage health care providers to continuously improve their performance. www.dfwbgh.org.

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Note to Editors: Additional materials such as a listing of the leadership and advisory teams for the DFW Value-Driven Health Care Initiative and the Texas Type 2 Diabetes Report are available upon request.