

Consumer Driven Health Plans – Are They Really?

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Since when does the consumer drive his health plan? Did you know that the American consumer can guess the price of a Honda within \$300, and yet are off by \$8,100 on a four-day hospital stay? Did you also know that 63% of consumers do not know the cost of their medical treatment until AFTER the bill arrives, AND 10% of them NEVER KNOW?

Quick Facts

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Given that 39% of consumers have thus far set aside NOTHING (not one penny) to cover the cost of future health care costs, is it any wonder that employers are fearful of the repercussions related to high deductibles for their employees?

It's easy to see in today's market that the consumer isn't driving health care decisions or shopping around for health care. Some say that this is reason enough to scrap the whole concept of consumer driven health plans that encourage the consumer to be a better consumer by shopping for health care services and buying health care more prudently.

At Client First we believe these are EXACTLY the reasons that we need to continue to drive education, tools and health plans that encourage the consumer to think about his health plan, his health care, and the cost of health care for Americans. Since 1992, we have actively encouraged what many today would call "consumer driven health plans". We have promoted choice, employee participation in the cost, and decisions related to not only health care plans, but their actual health care as well.

Over the years, we have educated employers and employees about RBRVS (Medicare's reimbursement strategy) and how it can help them (as consumers) in communicating with medical providers. We have been a leader in selling health plans with deductibles of \$1,000 or more for over TEN YEARS. At Client First, we know that ultimately, the American consumer is the only one that can truly slow the ever growing tide of health care trends. Remember, medical trend is not a simple issue of inflation, it's a matter of combined factors including, but certainly not limited to technology, utilization, cost shifting from government programs and uncompensated care, and yes, even advertising.

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I think that it is really about time to start working harder. Maybe we're already late, but still working hard to communicate, educate, and help drive solutions to our continued showdown with **health care costs that most consumers see purely as a reflection of health plan premium.** The fact that we've paid our health care premium each month doesn't make health care free! How we spend as in how we utilize health care IS everything.

How many of us would shrug off a speeding ticket if it never had any effect on our auto insurance premium? And yet, we ignore a multitude of healthy lifestyle choices as if they'll never affect our health care costs. How many of us could afford an auto insurance plan that provided coverage for tires, oil changes, tune-ups, car washes and even the wax we apply? Better yet, how many of us WOULD afford such coverage?

We'd carefully weigh the costs and profits involved in paying an insurance company to cover things that we can already afford on our own, and ultimately decide on our standard plans with ever higher deductibles to reduce premiums and save money!

Isn't this what we're talking about? At Client First, we believe that it is our role to provide tools and solutions for you. **It is clearly critical to the survival of our health care system.** Take a look at the tools available to help you help you save on health care plan costs, and therefore become MORE SATISFIED WITH OUR HEALTH CARE SYSTEM. After all, isn't this critical to your business or personal finances?

Start saving you money, so that when you have a rainy day, you'll know you're prepared. If you're not quite sure how to use the consumer driven health care model to save thousands of dollars each year, then please, call us, and let us show you how it's done.

Our thanks to Great-West Health Care for some of the statistics in this article.