

For Immediate Release

Cancer: A Complex Workplace Issue for Employers, Northeast Business Group on Health Report Finds

NEW YORK, October 22, 2015 – Employers say there’s a level of complexity in managing employees’ cancer-related needs that is not associated with any other type of condition, according to a new report from Northeast Business Group on Health (NEBGH). As a result, employers need help in evaluating the quality of cancer care their benefits dollars are purchasing, and want to be better equipped to assist employees who have been diagnosed with cancer, says the report. Findings are based on a NEBGH Solutions Center project involving a survey, detailed discussions with employers, and a Spring 2015 multi-stakeholder working roundtable comprised of more than 30 executives from large self-insured companies, health plans, consulting organizations and other stakeholders.

“The high cost of cancer care is a big concern for employers, but even before addressing those costs, they want to understand what, exactly, it is they are purchasing,” said Laurel Pickering, MPH, President and CEO of NEBGH. “Employers need clear guidelines and outcomes data to assess cancer care quality and value, and they also need resources for providing guidance and support to employees with a cancer diagnosis or a diagnosis in their family. Fear is a huge factor, and benefits managers want to be better equipped to deal with the emotional toll and the myriad of confusing treatment options, disability issues and financial ramifications associated with a cancer diagnosis. As the leading providers, health plans, and associations move forward on defining value in cancer treatment, NEBGH plans to keep our employer members abreast and part of the conversation by developing educational sessions, supportive tools and collaborative work groups.”

NEBGH’s report highlights many of the gaps employers face as they try to make sense of the landscape surrounding cancer. These include the relative efficacy of various treatments, variations in chemotherapy cost depending on site of care, outcomes at cancer Centers of Excellence versus local hospitals, and what type of support programs are most helpful for employees.

“Cancer is not one disease but hundreds,” said Jeremy Nobel, MD, MPH and NEBGH Solutions Center Executive Director. “Adding to this complexity are substantial emotional, social and financial burdens incurred once a cancer diagnosis affects an employee or a family member. Employers need more education about aspects of cancer care quality and cost including commonly accepted standards of care, definitions of centers of excellence, advances in genomic testing and personalized medicine, and the large variations in the cost of oncology medicines and their administration. They also need better tools and innovative new approaches for assisting patients and their families on what we call the multifaceted cancer journey, including emotional, social, and financial concerns.”

NEBGH's report says employers, health plans and other stakeholders can work together to improve outcomes-based cancer data so that employers can better understand the impact of care on their employee populations, design value-based purchasing strategies informed by that data, and use value-based benefit design to steer employees into high-performing networks of providers where available. It also says employers would welcome more cancer resources available in one place, trusted individuals helping employees to navigate the system, and facilitated access to vetted on-going support services of various kinds.

NEBGH's initial work on cancer was designed to gauge the level of employer interest in addressing issues related to cancer and the workplace, provide a platform for employers to voice their biggest concerns, and then put a multi-stakeholder roundtable to work in generating a list of opportunities and obstacles for improving cancer patient care and support. Based on this work, NEBGH has presented a "Cancer Quality 101" session for its members and plans a deeper exploration of the cancer "journey" with an eye toward better supporting employees, caregivers and benefits professionals.

About NEBGH

NEBGH is an employer-led coalition of healthcare leaders and other stakeholders with the mission of empowering members to drive excellence in health and achieve the highest value in healthcare delivery and the consumer experience. The Solutions Center is NEBGH's research and discovery platform for identifying the most promising, innovative opportunities for improving health outcomes, focused on employers as the catalyst for change.

Celgene, Genomic Health, Pfizer and Sanofi provided funding to NEBGH's Solutions Center for its work thus far on cancer.

Access the report [HERE](#).

For more information, contact Laurel Pickering at laurel@nebgh.org or 212-252-7440, ext. 224.

Media Contact:

Laurel Pickering

212.252.7440 ext 224

laurel@nebgh.org