

For Immediate Release

Targeted Interventions are Key for Employers Tackling Workplace Obesity, Northeast Business Group on Health Report Finds

NEW YORK, September 7, 2016 – Employers frustrated by their lack of progress in the workplace fight against weight gain and obesity should consider targeted, personalized programs for employee sub-sets combined with nutrition and fitness activities applicable to broad populations, says a new report from Northeast Business Group on Health (NEBGH). The report, “[*Tipping the Scales on Weight Control: New Strategies for Employers*](#),” suggests that segmenting employees by body mass index (BMI) and gearing programs and benefits most appropriate for each segment would help increase the effectiveness of employers’ efforts to tackle the obesity epidemic.

“Like other chronic diseases, obesity is best addressed through prevention, and most employers have done a good job of implementing eating and exercise programs designed to encourage healthy behaviors,” said Laurel Pickering, President and CEO of NEBGH. “But many employees are really in need of more help, and interventions such as digital coaching, medically-supervised weight loss, medications, behavioral counseling and bariatric surgery should all be considered as supplements to broader wellness programs. Investing in these interventions, through access to benefits and targeted programs, can have significant payoffs in terms of improved employee population

NEBGH’s report is based on interviews and a January 2016 workshop attended by 40 stakeholders, most of them employer benefits and/or wellness professionals. Executives from PSEG, Aetna and Montefiore Medical Center shared success stories about weight management interventions in their employee populations, and weight control experts shared their own perspectives on effective workplace approaches. Data-driven understanding of prevalence and risk for weight issues among employee populations, availability of basic interventions like nutrition and fitness programs across the full population, personalized programs with targeted communications for employees most at risk and convenient access to programs at work and at home were among the success factors cited.

“Despite obesity being recognized as a disease by the American Medical Association in 2013, shame and stigma still surround it, and gaps in benefits coverage for interventions such as sustained behavioral counseling, medically-supervised weight loss and medication may remain,” said Jeremy Nobel, MD, MPH and NEBGH Medical Director. “The good news is there are employer success stories from which others can learn. And movement in the delivery system toward more person-centered approaches to primary care makes it more likely that BMI will be taken seriously as a central health indicator, resulting in earlier and more sustained interventions to help employees avoid obesity and weight-related comorbidities such as diabetes, cardiovascular illness and cancer.”

NEBGH’s report says employers should keep an eye on trends such as digital tools for weight control, increased understanding of the emotional factors and behavioral cues that need to be addressed as part of weight control efforts and the use of onsite and near-site clinics to promote medically-supervised weight loss and an overall culture of health. With respect to culture of health, NEBGH says organization executives need to lead by example to avoid sending mixed messages to employees.

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.

Novo provided funding to NEBGH’s Solutions Center for its latest work on obesity and weight control.

Access the report [here](#).

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