

For Immediate Release

New High-Value Approaches to Musculoskeletal Disorders Can Pay Off for Employers, Says Northeast Business Group on Health

NEW YORK, September 20, 2017 – Employers can better manage the health and cost burdens of musculoskeletal disorders by implementing prevention strategies such as ergonomics training and movement-friendly workplace design, providing onsite physical therapy for those with acute or chronic pain, and paying for surgery with bundled pricing, says a new report from Northeast Business Group on Health (NEBGH). The report, “[Preventing and Treating Musculoskeletal Disorders: New Strategies for Employers](#),” says workplace-generated musculoskeletal disorders are increasing because of technology, open workplace design and remote workforces, and that as a result, prevention can enhance workplace health and productivity, and an organization’s bottom line.

“Musculoskeletal disorders have long been one of employers’ top concerns but new ways of working, especially among millennials, seem to be increasing their prevalence, so employers need to think about prevention through ergonomics training and workplace design, as well as new ways of addressing acute issues before they become chronic,” said Laurel Pickering, President and CEO of NEBGH. “Educating employees about pain and how to manage it, providing rapid access to physical therapy, and emphasizing primary care and evidence-based treatments like RICE – rest, ice, compression and elevation – can speed recovery, improve productivity and save costs associated with unnecessary diagnostic imaging and surgeries. Additionally, these types of interventions can reduce the overuse and misuse of medications such as opioids – another important concern for employers.”

NEBGH’s report is based on research, case studies and a roundtable of benefits managers from 20 national and global self-insured employers. It describes new approaches to musculoskeletal disorder prevention, the treatment of acute and chronic musculoskeletal pain, and high-value surgery for joint replacements, with specific case studies that illustrate employer outcomes. The report says surgery is appropriate only for the smallest segment of an employee population but can drive employer costs significantly.

“Hospital physicians, health plans and employers are all exploring innovative ways of ensuring that people who need surgery for musculoskeletal disorders receive high-quality care in the most efficient and cost-effective manner,” said Jeremy Nobel, MPH, MD, and Executive Director of NEBGH’s Solutions Center, which conducted this work. “Employers should investigate bundled payments for hip and knee replacement surgeries, especially since delivery systems are more willing to take on risk. Many employers are reluctant to shoulder the administrative burden of direct contracting with delivery systems for these surgical bundles but the rewards can be significant, and it’s possible employers can work with health plans to provide access to bundles.”

NEBGH's report says employers should analyze their data related to claims, disability, workers compensation and health risk assessments to consider where to start when it comes to better managing musculoskeletal disorders in their populations. The report says effective employee communications, coordination with other programs and services, success metrics and attention from senior executives are important for the success of any new employer-initiated initiative in the benefits realm.

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.

The report can be accessed [here](#).

For more information, contact Jeremy Nobel at jnobel@nebgh.org.

Media Contact:

Dr. Jeremy Nobel
Northeast Business Group on Health
jnobel@nebgh.org