MAKING THE BUSINESS CASE FOR CANCER PREVENTION AND EARLY DETECTION:
How Engaging Employees in Preventive Care Can Reduce Healthcare Costs

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The American Cancer Society (ACS) predicts that in 2008 about 1.5 million new cases of cancer will be diagnosed. The cost in lives is obviously significant; but the literal cost in dollars may be equally troubling. Cancer is an enormous cost to society in direct healthcare expenditures and indirect costs such as lost productivity in the workplace.

C-Change’s “Making the Business Case” initiative documents why employers should consider including scientifically proven cancer prevention and early detection services in their respective employee health insurance policies. Research has shown that prevention and early detection services, such as tobacco-free policies, tobacco cessation, as well as regular screenings, are proven methods of decreasing cancer risk among employees and increasing early diagnosis and associated medical care outcomes. The data also suggest that these cancer prevention and early detection services are effectively decreasing direct and indirect costs associated with cancer.

This white paper focuses on four leading types of cancer – breast cancer, colorectal cancer, cervical cancer and cancers associated with tobacco use. The paper illustrates how:

- Cancer costs burden businesses.
- Offering prevention and early detection health insurance benefits reduce both the direct and indirect costs of cancer for employers.
- Companies can start offering cancer prevention and screening services.

Prevention is Possible

Only through a combination of timely access to prevention, early detection and treatment will more lives – and money – be saved. According to a recent report by the ACS, at least half of all new cancer cases can be prevented or detected earlier through screening. The cost of prevention and early detection is typically less than the cost of treating late-stage cancer, so it is in business’ best interest to support preventive and screening strategies. (For more, see page 9.)

Prevention is Good for Business

Since employers provide health insurance to more than 50 percent (160 million) of Americans through their corporate health plans, they are well positioned to make a direct impact on efforts to control cancer-related costs. Direct medical expenses and indirect costs related to cancer cost every employer thousands of dollars each year investments in cancer prevention and early detection services are important long-term strategies to reduce costs. Consider the figures:

- Cancer cost the U.S. $89.0 billion in direct costs in 2007; lost productivity due to cancer cost $18.2 billion dollars; premature cancer-related death cost an astounding $112.0 billion.
- A study of major employers found that patients with cancer cost more than five times as much to insure than patients without cancer (approximately $16,000 vs. $3,000 in annual costs).
• Investment in cancer prevention and early detection provide the following “return on investment”:
  o Investing $2.95 per member per month to cover cancer screening may yield additional savings of up to $3.75 per member per month.
  o Investing $.18 to $.79 per member per month for a tobacco-cessation program, an employer can generate a cumulative savings of $1.70 to $2.20 per member per month.
(For more, see pages 10-11).

**What can Businesses Do?**

As indicated by the previously noted “return on investment,” it makes good business sense for employers to be actively engaged in promoting employee health insurance coverage and associated utilization of cancer prevention and early detection services. The C-Change “Making the Business Case” initiative strongly encourages all employers to adopt the following:

1. Work with your health plan to increase breast, cervical and colorectal cancer screening and tobacco use cessation
2. Encourage employees to get screened for breast, cervical, and colorectal cancer
3. Implement tobacco-free policies
(For more, see pages 12-15.)

Employers can play a pivotal role in reducing cancer incidence and premature death within the U.S. today. Healthier employees and healthier bottom lines can be achieved by providing scientifically-proven cancer prevention and early detection services and worksite policies and encouraging the utilization of these services.