

# The Value of Adherence



Jeffrey B. Kindler  
Chairman of the Board and CEO

The World Health Organization (WHO) defines adherence as “the extent to which a person’s behavior—taking medication, following a diet, and/or executing lifestyle changes, corresponds with agreed recommendations from a health care provider.”<sup>9</sup> In addition, the WHO reports that, on average, people adhere to recommended health practices only 50 percent of the time.<sup>9</sup> Many experts believe that low adherence and its association with poor health outcomes is a primary contributor to today’s escalating health care costs.<sup>7-9</sup> These same experts believe that the need to develop programs that help employees/dependents better adhere to recommended lifestyle and treatment guidelines will be a growing priority in the near future.<sup>7-9</sup> It will be especially important as the American workforce ages and the incidence of chronic health conditions such as heart disease, diabetes, and hypertension increase.

In one large study, higher levels of adherence to medications were associated with lower disease-related medical costs for diabetes and hypercholesterolemia. The study found that, in the case of diabetes, a 20 percent increase in medication adherence saved an average of \$1,074 per patient. On the other hand, a 20 percent decrease in adherence resulted in an increase of disease-related medical costs.<sup>8</sup>

The factors that contribute to low adherence are complex and include such variables as: lower socioeconomic status; severity of condition and complexity of therapy; knowledge and engagement of the health care team; and intentional and unintentional patient factors such as cost barriers and forgetfulness.<sup>7,9</sup>

Organizations can benefit by working with their health plans and employees to implement strategies that support and reinforce appropriate adherence practices. These practices include addressing cost and access barriers to effective interventions, providing incentives for meeting program goals, and emphasizing personal accountability from an employee perspective.

## Pfizer Inc

### Healthy Pfizer

#### Company Overview

Type of industry: Pharmaceutical

Number of employees: 100,000 worldwide

#### Program Components

- Confidential health Web site and online HRA for U.S. and Puerto Rico employees and dependents
- Annual health screenings and national programming customized by local site health teams
- One-on-one health coaching to reduce health risk factors and manage chronic conditions
- Incentive-based and fully integrated with Pfizer’s medical benefits including 100% coverage for preventive care and prescription medicines

#### Program Highlights

- 85% of U.S. employees and 52% of dependents completed the HRA in year one
- 21% enrollment in health coaching
- 80% of employees in Puerto Rico completed the HRA and health screenings
- National walking program enrolled 13,000 employees in first six weeks
- Year one data showing cost saving and a reduction in ER and hospitalization utilization

#### CEO Statement

“As a leader in the health care industry, Pfizer believes it is essential to provide our employees and their families with the tools and support to live healthy lives. This program embodies our health care principles: the power of prevention, the importance of an early diagnosis, and the necessity of the timely treatment of illness.”

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