Brainstorming with Vendors to Improve Musculoskeletal Health

Musculoskeletal health is a hot topic for many benefits teams, not just because of the cost of care, but also due to concerns around quality of life and productivity. In this case study, we’ll showcase how Danaher Corporation formed a task force and organized a vendor Health Summit to measure, intervene, and improve employee musculoskeletal health.

The problem.

Danaher wanted to better understand their musculoskeletal-related healthcare costs. They knew costs were rising, and that these conditions are often associated with other comorbid conditions that affect the health and happiness of employees. They also wanted to explore the indirect effects of musculoskeletal conditions so they could take action.

The team.

Artemis Health teamed up with Danaher’s benefits leaders and their benefits consulting group to help. First, we conducted an in-depth analysis to gather insight into musculoskeletal demographics, conditions, and trends. Here’s what we found:

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<th>Danaher Medical Spend for Musculoskeletal Disorders</th>
<th>Danaher Spend (Med+Rx) for Members with Musculoskeletal Disorders</th>
<th>Members with Claims for Musculoskeletal Disorders</th>
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The analysis revealed that both the number of members with claims, which includes employees and their spouses and dependents, and the cost of these conditions is rising. Additionally, we gained an understanding of top conditions and how they’re being treated:

Over 50% of members with musculoskeletal disorders are not receiving physical therapy, occupational therapy, or chiropractic treatment. However, nearly 25% of those with musculoskeletal conditions are taking some form of opioids.

The average cost for an orthopedic surgery episode is $40,000, and spinal fusion surgery can cost upwards of $175,000. By intervening early for those with musculoskeletal conditions, the goal is to lessen the need for costly surgery later in life.

**Walking in another’s shoes.**

Next, Danaher’s benefits leaders wanted to gather anecdotal data on the work environments and requirements of associates. To do this they go to “gemba”, which means “the place where the actual work is done.” They partnered with the employee health and safety team at one of their operating companies to gather feedback on the day-to-day work and conditions experienced by associates. While data is key, it only presents one side of the story. Going to “gemba” helped Danaher learn from employees and focus on what matters to them.
The summit.

Danaher, their consulting partners, and Artemis used this data to plan and organize a “Health Summit,” which included a large group of Danaher’s benefits vendors:

- Health plans
- Pharmacy benefit managers
- Wellness programs
- Chronic condition management vendors
- Employee assistance programs
- And more

The format of the Health Summit included two days of brainstorming sessions, group exercises, setting priorities, and sharing expertise. The end goal was to develop pilot innovations that mitigate the future costs of musculoskeletal conditions.

The results.

Several key learnings emerged during the Health Summit due to close collaboration among Danaher’s benefits partners:

01 Best practices for musculoskeletal conditions include self-management, physical and psychological therapies, and some forms of complementary medicine; pharmacological and surgical treatments should receive less emphasis

02 Care providers should focus on pain management vs. pain elimination

03 Mental health is a significant, underlying comorbidity that’s critical to address side-by-side with musculoskeletal conditions
The experts at the Health Summit also offered plans for some innovative interventions:

01  Pilot a pre-disability program to prevent a disability or return a member to work quickly and safely

02  Leverage “Wellbeing Champions” at worksites to promote movement and exercise throughout the day

03  Develop targeted campaigns for at-risk groups and early intervention

04  Roll out point solutions for low back pain and prevention

05  Continue opioid utilization management program with clinical oversight to educate members and reduce potential misuse and abuse

06  Explore a center of excellence strategy to steer members to most effective and cost-efficient care

07  Explore a navigation tool to help members find appropriate care

08  Pilot a 2nd opinion service

Moving forward.

Danaher will implement a number of these solutions aimed at musculoskeletal health over the coming months and measure their impact with the help of Artemis and their consultant.

“At Danaher, we believe in piloting. That way, if we’re going to fail, we fail fast. And we can pilot again, try something new, and see what drives the best results for our members. We strive to implement the best solutions for our unique population.”

– Amy Broghammer, Health & Welfare Benefits Manager, Danaher Corporation