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From the Masthead



Mainstay Insurance Brokerage Inc. Phone: (905)886-9203

In order to serve you better

To assist you with your employee benefit plan, we are continually updating our website. Located at:

www.mainstayinsurance.ca

The site provides easy access to many insurance company's websites and to the health and dental claim forms you utilize on a regular basis. We have also added links to the log on pages for members (employees) in order to provide quick access to other websites.

If you use a form that is not on our website and would like it added, please send us an e-mail at:

Dave@mainstayinsurance.ca

Did you know that...

Your dentist must collect the co-insurance payment for your claim. You may pay the entire amount at time of service and then be reimbursed by the insurer OR you may pay just the co-insurance amount to your dentist and they will obtain the remainder directly from the insurer through "assignment of benefits". Failing to pay your co-insurance and/or deductible amount is considered fraud and your dentist can lose their license and you can be charged for doing so. For more information please refer to the Ontario Dental Association Fact Sheet on their web site at...

http://www.oda.on.ca/member/index.php?option=com_docman&task=doc_download&qid=28&Itemid=19

Employee Assistance Plans (EAP's)

"An employee assistance plan (EAP) is an employee benefit program offered by employers to help employees deal with personal problems that might adversely impact their job performance, health, and well-being. EAPs typically include short-term counselling and referral services for employees and their dependants. Managers may also refer their employees to their EAP provider when there is unacceptable performance or conduct issues.

We have been encouraging clients to add EAP's to their benefit plans in recent years and where plans are in place, we encourage employees to use them when needed. Some insurers have automatically added EAP's as part of their benefit offering while others offer it as a stand-alone product that employers can choose to add for an additional cost.

EAP's perform a number of roles. First and foremost they assist the employee and their families in times of need with easy to access counselling services. These services can be used for alcohol and drug abuse, bereavement, family and marital issues, mental health and psychological issues. Many EAP programs also offer online self-help information for issues such as; dealing with

stress, relationships, depression and health concerns.

These programs can provide a vital link for employees (and their eligible dependants) to services they might not otherwise be able to access.

Imagine a situation where an employee, their spouse and their children all see the same family doctor. One individual might not be comfortable raising an issue even though physician privacy is in place. By utilizing the EAP services that individual can obtain help through another confidential avenue without having to be "seen" at the local doctors office.

They can access EAP day and night and from anywhere. ALL EAP contacts are protected by confidentiality and no details are shared with the employer.

Some EAP programs may also offer coaching support to managers who are dealing with employees who are experiencing outside issues that may be impacting their work performance.

Implementing an EAP program offers many benefits for employers. The original goal of an EAP program was to offer early intervention to assist

employees before issues escalated to become lost time incidents and potentially become long-term disabilities. They have grown and evolved to meet these early goals and also to assist employers in situations where there can be workplace issues that the employer may not even be aware of. Be it a poisoned workplace, bullying or issues with other staff, an EAP can provide a support mechanism that employees can access when they may not be comfortable speaking directly to their manager. The privacy of the service helps to protect both the employee and the employer.

With the introduction of changes in the Occupational Health and Safety Act and the new Workplace Violence and Harassment legislation to protect employees from workplace violence, EAP's play an even stronger role.

Should you ever be faced with a situation or actual harassment claim that is covered by this legislation, having an EAP program in place will be an excellent resource and will illustrate to others that you are a supportive employer who understands the importance of taking employee issues seriously.

For more information on EAP's, give us a call.



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Note: This side of the newsletter is intended for you the plan administrator. The information on the 'front' is targeted more to your staff and can be copied and distributed for their reference.

Just in case you were wondering...

Ontario has approved one of the world's most expensive drugs for patients suffering from a life-threatening genetic disorder that damages vital organs. The drug Soliris is prescribed for individuals with atypical hemolytic uremic syndrome (aHUS), a disorder that affects about 30 people in Ontario. The medication can cost more than \$700,000 per year and is only approved for coverage in severe cases.

<http://goo.gl/Yn6Z2U>

This information is provided as a reference to clients of Mainstay Insurance Brokerage Inc. It is not intended as advice. Your situation and the contract provided by your insurer as well as any relevant legislation shall always take precedence. Always obtain appropriate legal, human resource or accounting advice.

Hepatitis C has a cure... and WOW does it cost!

As I talk to clients and write articles for this newsletter and other trade publications, I often feel like "Chicken Little" repeating my "sky is falling" mantra about high cost drugs. As new high cost drugs are introduced however, reality seems to support my "sky is falling" cry.

Over the years we have seen the emergence of some wonderful life saving drugs that have helped many individuals successfully treat their illness and introduced a quality of life they never thought they would experience again. We have seen HIV move from a terminal illness to a chronic one. We have seen biologic treatments for rheumatoid arthritis and other autoimmune diseases, including multiple sclerosis and others. Many of these treatments are "at home" injections that can cost from \$15,000 to \$60,000 per year and are required treatment for the rest of the patients life.

These treatments affect small populations of employees and they ensure that your employees remain productive members of your company while at the same time avoiding disability claims and productivity loss due to time off etc.

The cost of these drugs often has a devastating effect on your benefit plan's renewal pricing however. Although we chose plan designs with stop-loss protection (usually over \$10,000) to protect against high cost claims, the continuous nature of these claims can cause rates to

jump significantly. In some cases the increases are so large that in order to preserve the benefit plan, some benefits have to be reduced or dropped altogether leaving employees and their families without critical coverage.

In order to try and preserve plans, we have been working to try influence insurers to co-ordinate these claims with the Ontario Trillium Drug plan as it was originally intended to do. It is not an easy process but one that we must be successful in if we are going to ensure affordable and viable drug plans going forward.

So how does this all relate to Hepatitis C?

Last year several drugs were approved for the CURE of Hepatitis C. This is the first drug CURE of a significant illness that I can recall in my lifetime and is really quite extraordinary. The treatment takes from 12-48 weeks and has a greater than 90% success rate. It is estimated that there are as many as 300,000 Canadians infected with Hep C. The cost to treat each person ranges from \$30,000 to \$135,000. This one-time cost is significant in that the price to cure all those infected could easily add up to more than the total drug spending for ALL drugs in Canada last year.

So what does this mean? There is a good chance (1 in 100) that you will encounter an employee or dependant who requires this drug in the coming years. The benefit of this cure will be: no LTD

claims, no hospitalization and no liver transplant needed. This is great for the person and for society at large, but is also a large expense for an employer.

So what are we doing to help? We always work with the insurer to remove claims that are non-repeating when your renewal is calculated. We have also been working over the past 3 years to have insurers integrate with the Ontario Trillium Drug program and properly coordinate claims. The Trillium program was designed to assist Ontarians with high cost claims in comparison to household income. The insurers have been paying these claims to assist employees instead of allowing the province to do so as the program was intended. As we see treatments like the biologics and Hep C getting to be more common and costly, this lack of coordination between insurers and the Trillium program is having a detrimental effect on employers through their benefit plans.

As a result, we may ask clients that are experiencing these high claims to move to 80% drug plans (if not already there) and petition the insurers to properly coordinate claims to ensure employees can keep their drug coverage at a price that employers can handle.

If you would like more information on our efforts to change the way the industry works, please read some of the articles on our "In the News" page on our website.

<http://mainstayinsurance.ca/in-the-news/>