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Healthcare Brand Management

“A Conversation About Employee Benefit Consultants
And Their Role In Pharmaceutical Market Access”

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How Do EBCs Work With Their Clients?

- Employee Benefit Consultants (EBCs) are hired by companies to advise and help manage compensation and benefits provided to workers, their dependents and retirees; some key areas EBCs work with clients are:
 - Compensation including salaries, hourly wages, raises, bonuses, pensions, 401Ks, profit sharing, stock options
 - Health benefits such as dental, medical, pharmacy, vision
 - Staffing increases/decreases, associated budget changes
 - Human resource policies

How Do EBCs Work With Their Clients?

- Depending on client and organizational structure, EBCs may work with accounting, administration, finance, human resources, risk management and other units; in many cases, they work with the senior leadership of these departments
- EBCs help clients choose benefit vendors, assist in developing benefit plans, monitor performance of benefit vendors/plans
- EBCs evaluate benefit plan vendors to determine which offer lower costs, better coverage, more services, etc.; this includes insurance carriers, managed care organizations (MCOs), pharmacy benefit managers (PBMs) and others

How Do EBCs Work With Their Clients?

- Depending on the consultant, they may be independent, be a staff member of a dedicated employee benefits consulting firm, or be associated with an insurance broker, third party administrator (TPA) or other type of organization
- EBCs have deep knowledge of the benefits/ compensation landscape and are supported by specialized references, analytical tools and staff, possess industry survey data and other resources
- EBCs are looking out for their client's best interests by being subject matter experts

What Other Services Do EBCs Provide To Clients?

- Help clients negotiate better rates from plan vendors
- Analyze previous and present prescription benefit costs; identify trends and recommend changes
- Facilitate resolution of escalated issues which may involve plan vendors, client, members and associated parties
- Monitor and perform auditing of benefit plans and provide other support to confirm the plan is being managed appropriately according to coverage rules, assigned copays, etc.

What Are The Professional Backgrounds Of EBCs?

- Some have worked for benefit plans and/or worked in the employee benefit or human resource departments of employers; they may also have additional credentials:
 - Certified Employee Benefit Specialists (CEBS)
 - Compensation Management Specialist (CMS)
 - Group Benefits Associate (GBA)
 - Professional In Human Resources (PHR)
 - Registered Health Underwriter (RHU)
 - Retirement Plans Associate (RPA)
 - Frequently in medical/pharmacy benefits, a doctorate in Pharmacy (PharmD)

How Do EBCs Impact Market Access Through Plan Design?

- EBCs advise clients on pharmacy benefit plan design:
 - Portion of benefits to be company paid, what portion will be covered by workers (also known as “members”) in terms of premiums, copays, other fees
 - Decide what medications will be included in plan coverage
 - Review terms of coverage for medication with specific attention towards biological, injectable and other high cost products

How Do EBCs Assess A New Product?

- Using various information sources, they review new medications as they may significantly impact plan costs, benefit designs, members and physicians:
 - Published data from pharmaceutical manufacturers
 - Review government clinical trial and other industry websites
 - Collect insight from their own data and from plan vendors
 - Network with other EBCs and industry contacts such as physicians, nurses, pharmacists

What Are Key Details EBCs Are Seeking About New Products?

- What is the drug's cost , how may it reduce plan/member costs?
- How does its cost compare to generics or brands within its class and others which parallel its indications?
- How does its efficacy compare to generics, brands within its class and other categories which parallel its indications; can it lead to better outcomes?
- How is it administered, what are its side effects, does the product's attributes enhance or detract from patient adherence?

What Are Key Details EBCs Are Seeking About New Products?

- How/where will members obtain it?
- How does it fit in the overall prescription benefit plan and the formulary, will it require significant changes to the benefit plan?
- What member and physician support is required for it, are programs or services required for the product to be managed?

How May An EBC Impact Market Access For A New Product?

- An EBC may recommend the client and the plan to closely manage or reduce access to the medication such as :
 - Denial of coverage
 - Require prior authorization
 - Have it featured as a later choice in step therapy
 - Assign a higher copay
 - Other restrictions

How May An EBC Impact Market Access For A New Product?

- They may carry recommendations across their book of business, impacting access in all of their client's benefit plans
- As multiple plans are impacted, this can have a widening effect on the plan vendors and how they choose to manage the product across their book of business
- Pharmaceutical manufacturers may have to more assertively contract and discount the product to gain access to the marketplace

What Are Strategies For Brand Managers To Use With EBCs?

- Include them in the market preparation plans of launches
- Develop sound clinical/financial value propositions which align with how EBCs evaluate new medications
- Share information with EBCs as well as medical directors of employers, health plans and PBMs plus pharmacy directors of health plans and PBMs; assess their feedback to fine tune value propositions and market access initiatives
- Conduct interviews, advisory boards and focus groups in which EBCs are included
- Participate in benefit conferences and other events through presentations and other venues to facilitate dialogue with EBCs

Summary

- EBCs have pivotal roles in pharmaceutical market access
- By including EBCs early in launch plans, their influence can be accounted for in strategy development
- To augment the brand and the product's attributes, sound clinical/financial positioning is important to account for how EBCs and other benefit decision makers will evaluate it
- EBCs can provide insight about health plans, benefit design, employer decision making, member/patient populations, cost concerns and other details

I am a Healthcare Marketer seeking a new opportunity. My background is brand management (pharma, devices, services), managed care marketing and digital marketing. Feel free to contact me about roles or connect with me to network...

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