

INWELLNESS

creating healthy communities

Focus on Health Care

Milwaukee doctor launches online wellness network

The Business Journal - by Corrinne Hess

Date: Friday, December 3, 2010, 5:00am CST

After spending more than 30 years working as a clinical psychologist, Dr. Jim Morningstar has decided many of the problems facing the health care industry could be solved if patients took more control of their own well-being.

It's not a new concept. In fact, putting the power in the patients' hands was one of the driving reasons for the creation of the high-deductible health insurance plans and health savings accounts used today by many employers throughout southeastern Wisconsin.

Morningstar's approach however, is unique.

This fall, he launched InWellness, Milwaukee, an online network of health care providers, including many who practice alternative medicine, that members can access to get their health care questions answered.

The hope is that many of the medical problems people are facing can be alleviated using various holistic practices and eventually save millions of dollars in health care costs.

"I don't believe the health care crisis is spiraling costs or lack of access; I think those are just symptoms of the problem," Morningstar said. "We need to empower patients to listen to their body so they'll know when something is wrong."

When fear becomes the driver, patients immediately seek help from costly specialists and agree to tests that are sometimes needless, said Morningstar. He founded the School



Scott Paulus

Dr. Jim Morningstar . . . "We need to empower patients to listen to their body so they'll know when something is wrong."

of Integrative Psychology, Milwaukee, in 1983 which he said has graduated dozens of holistic practitioners working in the Milwaukee-area.

“We live in an educated community that understands the need for health care to nurture the best health of the whole person: mind, body and spirit,” he said.

Overall Assessment

With many health care and insurance company experts agreeing that a well-run wellness program can carry with it a return on investment of \$3 for every \$1 spent, Morningstar’s InWellness is just one of dozens of wellness programs being offered to area employers and consumers.

He’s marketing the program by pushing its “comprehensive” assessment, which looks at 12 areas of a person’s life and holistic approach.

Employers are offered three tiers, each of which offers different forms of coverage. The tiers range in price from \$485 per employee per year to \$965. A company with 20 employees who choose tier three would spend \$19,300 per year on the program.

The average amount of money Wisconsin employers spend on wellness programs has recently increased to between \$200 and \$400 per employee, per year, according to the Wellness Council of Wisconsin.

The providers in the network work together to discuss a patient’s health problem and the best approach for solving it. So far, there are about 30 providers in the network.

Lifestyle has been found to be the single most important factor determining your pattern of general health, Morningstar said.

“It is important that you self-educate to take charge of your daily life and to set healthy lifestyle goals,” he said. “The choices you make have a dominant influence on your health and wellness.”

Jessica Raddemann, executive director of the Wellness Council of Wisconsin, said more employers are interested in finding creative ways to increase employee engagement in wellness programs, including using holistic approaches such as chiropractic care for stress management or hypnosis for smoking cessation. Employers should gauge what

employees are interested in and utilize health risk assessment data when choosing a wellness program, said Raddemann, who is not familiar with InWellness.

“What’s important is to listen to the data in an organization,” she said. “if this is an opportunity to get an employee to participate who wouldn’t normally participate, it might be something that works.”