



Mike Sullivan and Chris von Heymann can give employers real and specific data on drug plan cost drivers so they can make smart decisions.

Cubic Health Inc. : Making sense of the numbers

High-tech combines with pharmacy common sense for drug plan analysis

BY VICTORIA FULFORD

In the complex world of drug benefit plans, it's easy to lose sight of the big picture.

Cubic Health Inc., a Toronto-based drug plan management and clinical integration company founded by pharmacists Chris von Heymann and Michael Sullivan, uses pharmacy know-how and technology to give plan sponsors a true and accurate picture of their drug spending so that they can make informed decisions for the future.

"Measure, understand and manage" are the keywords of the company, whose goal is to ensure the optimal use and sustainability of drug benefit plans so plan members have access to the medications they require now and into the future.

To help achieve this aim, the company has developed a series of analytical tools, among them, a searchable database that attempts to get a handle on the constantly shifting landscape of available drug therapies.

The Cubic Health Canadian Drug Database (CHCDD) contains regularly updated information on every product with a drug

identification number and product information number in Canada (more than 33,000 DINs and PINs in all), combined with data on federal, provincial and territorial scheduling, public plan coverage, pricing information and product substitution.

The CHCDD also includes a drug classification system, developed from scratch by the company's team of pharmacists, which classifies all products in the database by means of a three-tier structure, taking into account the general physical area affected, the specific disease states the drug is used to treat, as well as the pharmacological class of the product.

Together with blind drug-claims data from insurers on things such as the number and type of claims filed and the demographics of the workforce, the CHCDD can be used to create a detailed portrait of the utilization and cost pressures faced by a specific drug plan. There's nothing else like it in the benefits marketplace.

"Our focus is working on predictive tools to help groups predict their spending," says president Michael Sullivan. "If you break

[drug utilization information] down into pieces, it makes analysis over time easier."

In addition to predicting future drug plan spending, the system allows insurers to pinpoint the disease states and conditions that are driving up plan costs, identify opportunities for programs targeting specific disease states, and forecast the impact of design and formulary changes.

The database is the result of more than a year's work and has been in use by the company since spring. In addition to a small but dedicated technical staff, the company employs a number of consulting pharmacists on a contract basis.

Von Heymann and Sullivan still practise in the community on a casual basis.

"We know as pharmacists the nightmare of administration of these [plans] at the pharmacy level, so the changes we propose and the kind of initiatives we want to implement ... we want them to be very pharmacy friendly," says Sullivan. "We're hoping any success that we achieve is going to reflect well on the profession."

