



Johns Hopkins Work Stride: Managing Cancer at Work

Health care benefit program providing a gateway to information, prevention, treatment and support for employees and managers.

PUBLISHED ARTICLES, STATISTICS AND AWARDS:

- Article: What's Working | Helping Employees Manage Cancer
 - Statistics: Effect of cancer at the work place
 - Awards: Various Recognitions received by Work Stride
 - Testimonials: Insights from employees, supervisors and HR managers using the program
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ARTICLE:

What's Working | Helping Employees Manage Cancer

The following article from Benefits Magazine, highlights Work Stride as a useful workplace program, designed to fill an existing need. The article focuses on Pitney Bowes' program implementation and employee success with Johns Hopkins Work Stride: Managing Cancer at Work.

what's working

helping employees
manage cancer

by | **Chris Vogel, CEBS**

When a working person is diagnosed with cancer, his or her first question often is “Am I going to survive?” followed by “Am I going to be able to continue working?” And when a spouse, parent or child is the cancer patient, an employee may fear missing work to provide care and go along on doctor and treatment visits.

Anxiety is high for both patients and their caregivers, who don't know what to expect or how they'll get through it.

A program developed by the Johns Hopkins Kimmel Comprehensive Cancer Center in Baltimore, Maryland for its own employees and tested at Pitney Bowes Inc. is designed to help calm the fears and answer questions of cancer patients and their caregivers. The program also helps workplace managers and supervisors know what they can and cannot say to employees diagnosed with cancer, how to create a supportive workplace and what accommodations they may need to make.

“I think the best programs come out of an identified need, and we were seeing it in our own employees,” said Terry Langbaum, the center's chief administrative officer. When Hopkins co-workers are diagnosed with cancer, they often turn to Langbaum and Lillie Shockney, administrator of the Kimmel Center's breast cancer center and a nurse by training. Both are cancer survivors.

“Over the years, many, many of our employees have called us . . . and we try to calm them down, talk to them about what they need to do first, what they need to be thinking about and what they're likely to encounter,” Langbaum said.

“Knowledge is a very good thing. It reduces anxiety tremendously. We were doing it enough

that we thought maybe we could develop a tool that other employers could use that would do exactly what we're doing here for our employees.”

That's how “Managing Cancer at Work” was born two years ago. The program is available to the 44,000 employees of Johns Hopkins Medicine, which includes the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine, five hospitals and the cancer center and is being marketed to other employers.

Hopkins wanted to test the program with an outside worker population and agreed to beta-test the program at Pitney Bowes after meeting Mary Bradley, the company's director of health care strategy, at an industry function. Based in Stamford, Connecticut, Pitney Bowes has 10,000 U.S. employees, many of whom are hourly workers in mail presorting facilities throughout the country.

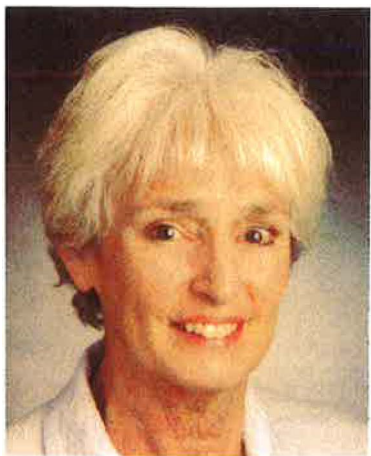
About 500 Pitney Bowes employees are diagnosed with cancer each year. Although the company provides benefits and offers many resources to help them, Bradley said, “when someone is diagnosed, it's just such a frightening, emotional time. They immediately want to jump into treatment, so it's difficult to have them start researching a little bit more to be sure the diagnosis is right, that they have the right treatment. Employees just kind of assume they're on the right path, whatever the doctor tells them. Unfortunately, we all know that's not always true.”

Googling *cancer treatment* “gets a million hits,” Bradley said. “We want to steer employees toward a trusted source, which Hopkins definitely is.”

The program website has one portal for employees who are patients and caregivers and another portal for managers and supervisors. The employee portal has individualized tools to



Terry Langbaum
Chief Administrative Officer
Johns Hopkins Kimmel
Comprehensive Cancer Center



Mary Bradley
Director of Health Care Strategy
Pitney Bowes Inc.

help employees determine which cancer screenings they should be getting, information on cancer prevention and early detection, and in-depth information employees need when confronted by a cancer diagnosis—for example treatment options and what to expect from chemotherapy, radiation and other treatments. The manager and supervisor portal has information about accommodating employees with cancer and their caregivers and compliance with laws such as the Americans with Disabilities Act and the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) and with human resources policies and procedures.

The other part of the program, which employers may choose to offer to employees, is a nurse navigator who serves as an advocate and educator. Among other kinds of guidance, she helps employees understand what benefits they're entitled to and what resources are available to help with paying for deductibles and copays. The navigator talks via telephone with patients, caregivers and managers. Because she is very familiar with an employer's overall benefits program and leave policies, she can guide employees on getting the most out of them.

So far, the program's website has been the most-used feature. Recently, Bradley said, one woman wrote in an e-mail to the benefits office that "the website was tremendous. It helped her prepare for visits with her physicians. The physician was amazed at the amount of information she understood and the questions she asked."

People who talk with the nurse navigator say they find her very helpful as well, Bradley said. The navigator's role is to empower employees with enough information that they can ask questions about their treatments and, if being able to work is very important to them, options that would allow them to work more during treatment.

"We had another employee come forward who used the navigator, who recommended he discuss treatment options with his doctor," Bradley said. "If he had stayed on the treatment path he was on, he would have missed an enormous amount of work. He changed the treatment path and didn't miss a day of work."

The navigator might suggest which days and time of day a cancer patient should receive treatments to avoid missing work, Langbaum said. If side effects from chemotherapy hit two or three days after an infusion and last two days, for example, the navigator might suggest the patient seek treatment on Wednesdays so the side effects occur over the weekend. She said that 95% of Hopkins employees are working during their cancer diagnosis and treatment, which she attributes partly to the Managing Cancer at Work program.

Employees who are caregivers of a spouse, parent or other loved one with cancer also have many questions and decisions to make. "You want to be there when your loved one is getting treatments, when they're getting scans, when they're going to get information that might not be good," Langbaum said. "Which of those visits is it important for you to be at and which ones can you skip?"

The website and navigator try to support caregivers so they don't neglect their own health. "We've seen time and again someone who has been a caregiver for a year or a year and a half, and the patient dies, within a few months that caregiver is diagnosed with something awful," Langbaum said. "They've ignored symptoms because they were wrapped up in what they were doing."

At Pitney Bowes, the first person who went through this program was somebody whose husband had a cancer diagnosis. Bradley said the woman came to her and said, "Out of all the people I've talked to, this is the first group that said, 'How are *you* doing. You know, you need to pay attention to your own health as well.'"

The third audience for the program, managers and supervisors, needs to know what they can and cannot say to an employee with a cancer diagnosis or who is caring for a loved one. They need to understand how various laws protect the employee and what leave they are entitled to under the law and the company's policies, Langbaum said. "Should they be on FMLA? Are they going to be entitled to short-term and long-term disability?" Failure to comply with the law can be costly to an employer.

what's working

Although managers and supervisors need to be an employee's advocate, "you still need to get your work done. And that is a balancing act," she said. The program discusses issues such as how to handle the increased workload created when an employee who is ill misses work or how to recognize when it's time to recommend that an employee take disability leave while ensuring a smooth transition for the employee.

"The most important thing we're learning is that our managers and supervisors are all over the board in terms of what they understand and in terms of how they communicate and how empathetic they are," Langbaum said.

"Managers and supervisors can lack education and even, at times, compassion, and they can make remarks to employees with cancer that put the employer at risk for EEOC complaints." But "we also see the other side, which is the manager who will go way beyond where they should to accommodate."

Among Pitney Bowes employees, Bradley said, the most-used feature of the Hopkins website is information on cancer screenings and prevention—something Langbaum said was always an important feature. "The most important thing we can do is help the company prevent cancer or pick it up early when it's very treatable."



STATISTICS:

Helpful facts about Cancer and the Workplace

- In the US, the number of **adults living with a history of cancer continues to grow**, driven by:
 - increased incidence of cancer,
 - increased likelihood of successful treatment and survival for those diagnosed
- The American Cancer Society estimates the lifetime risk of developing cancer to be **42% for men and 38% for women**
- The five-year relative **survival rate for those diagnosed between 2005 and 2011 was 69%**, up from 49% for those diagnosed between 1975 and 1977 (American Cancer Society, 2016).
- For self-insured employers, **cancer patients typically account for over 50% of all claims over \$25,000**



AWARDS:

Work Stride is proud to have received the following:



The CEO Roundtable on Cancer

- CEO Cancer Gold Standard™ Accreditation



Maryland Cancer Collaborative (MCC)

- Innovative Systems Change Award



Digital Health Awards

- Gold Winner



Internet Advertising Competition Awards

- Outstanding Website
- Nelson's Story – Best Medical Online Video Specifically Designed for the Workplace



TESTIMONIALS:

Feedback shared by Work Stride program users

“We’re able to self-educate and formulate our management strategies with information that is compliant with HR policy. [We] shared with employees the things we learned and had frank and open conversations with them to ensure their needs are met.”

-Manager

“I can’t tell you how many times employees come to me and thank me for having this benefit. We knew there was a need, but we had no idea how great a need until we actually put the program in place.”

-Senior HR Manager

“[The nurse navigator] is a compassionate and knowledgeable resource [providing] outstanding advice and counsel.”

-Survivor