Healthy WorkLife
an online resource for Wellness managers

# Wellness is Important, but Don't Ignore the Source of the Highest Costs

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## By Gregg Raybuck, President, Alere Health



As employers focus on ramping up their wellness programs to comply with health reform – they also need to make sure they include intensive case management programs for the sickest and costliest employees. In 2009, 1% of Americans were responsible for 22% of the healthcare costs, while 5% drove 50% of the $1.26 trillion spent on healthcare that year[1].

In the past few years, media and industry attention have increasingly focused on innovative wellness programs that improve engagement – a necessary step in the evolution of health management services. Just a few years ago, we realized that we were focusing so much on caring for the sick that we were not doing anything to prevent further illness in the healthy population. With this awareness, we adjusted our focus to prevention and helping employers develop a culture of health, and rightly so.

However, now that we have firmly established the need for wellness and prevention – 70% of the nation's employers have some type of health or wellness program – we need to keep improving upon our wellness programs, of course, but not forget the source of the real costs. We need to make sure that we don't get so caught up in wellness that we overlook the increasing pool of employees with chronic conditions, especially those with the highest cost conditions driving the majority of healthcare costs.

Among the highest cost conditions facing employers are cancer, heart disease, pulmonary disorders, trauma from injuries, and maternity care, which includes care management services for premature infants who must be hospitalized in costly neonatal intensive care units (NICU). To illustrate, half of the $10 billion spent annually on newborn care alone covers the 10% of infants who are born preterm each year[2].



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Individuals with life-threatening health conditions and women with high-risk pregnancies require more clinical attention and care than what traditional care management programs can offer. Case management programs offer specialized case managers, who collaborate with physicians, health plans and other care providers to provide personalized clinical attention and coordinated care that improves health and quality of life, and reduces unnecessary utilization and healthcare costs.

The most effective case management programs are comprehensive, offering personalized care management for people with: cancer in most sites and stages; high-acuity, complex, and/or multiple chronic conditions; life-limiting or terminal illnesses; trauma cases involving acute and/or disabling conditions; complicated pregnancies due to risk for preterm birth; and health conditions during pregnancy such as nausea and vomiting, history of preterm birth, and diabetes.

Results include improvement in health outcomes and patient satisfaction, and reductions in: acuity levels, hospital admissions, lengths of stay in the hospital, levels of care and costs.

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[1]USA Today, "5% of patients account for half of healthcare spending", Jan. 11, 2012

[2]TCS Healthcare Technologies Newsletter, "Implementing High Risk Pregnancy Care Programs," 2010



## About the Author

**Gregg Raybuck** became President of Alere Health in February 2012. He is responsible for overall company strategy, performance and growth, providing leadership and direction to operations, sales, marketing, program development and reimbursement. He has total problem-solving responsibility for Alere Health's operations and expansion strategies.

Previously, he served as President of the Women's and Children's Health Division beginning in November 2006. Previously, Gregg served as Senior Vice President of Sales for Women's and Children's Health beginning in August 2006. He was associated with Matria Healthcare from 1992 to January 2001, last serving as President of the Cardiology business unit of the company. Prior to his appointment as President of the Cardiology business, Mr. Raybuck held the position of Vice President of Sales and Marketing for Women's Health.

Mr. Raybuck earned a bachelor's degree in business from Thomas Edison State College.



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