

Wednesday, 30 June 2010

HCF signs up 25,000th member to chronic disease support service, *My Health Guardian*

- *Strongest demand for phone-based chronic disease support coming from the over 55's, reducing pressure on hospital services*
- *Cardiac and musculoskeletal problems overtake diabetes as the most common chronic conditions reported by My Health Guardian users*

HCF Group announced today that *My Health Guardian*, the personalised health support service delivered to HCF members in partnership with Healthways Australia, is now helping more than 25,000 members with a chronic disease.

New data reveals that while members of all ages have signed up to the service, the majority (77%) are aged over 55, the group statistically most likely to require hospital treatment.

While diabetes still affects a significant proportion (51%) of *My Health Guardian* participants, it has been overtaken as the most commonly reported chronic condition by cardiac (74%) and musculoskeletal (73%) problems, such as coronary artery disease, arthritic and lower back pain. More than half (56%) of the users benefiting from *My Health Guardian* are women.

By tackling chronic conditions before they reach the stage of hospitalisation, *My Health Guardian* is helping to reduce pressure on health services while also improving quality of life and wellbeing for HCF members.

Launched by HCF in May 2009 as a \$100 million investment over five years, *My Health Guardian* is now the largest chronic disease support program operated by a single health insurer in Australia. As well as 1.1 million HCF members, the program was made available to close to 170,000 Manchester Unity members in March.

Unaudited figures for the program's first six months of operation show it is on track to reduce the incidence of unnecessary hospitalisation for the first 5,000 participating members by more than 15%.

Chief Medical Officer for the HCF Group, Dr Andrew Cottrill, said chronically ill Manchester Unity and HCF members were already seeing the benefits of the *My Health Guardian* service.

"What's unique about this scheme is the comprehensive nature of the support offered, and the fact that every member can benefit," Dr Cottrill said.

"Early data supports the strong business case for *My Health Guardian*. We are providing a clear point of difference to members while also helping to reduce strain on hospital services."

My Health Guardian provides phone-based and online support to HCF members across the full spectrum of health circumstances. The program is delivered on behalf of HCF by Healthways Australia, whose team of qualified nurses, dieticians and exercise physiologists work with participants to guide personalised health, wellbeing and chronic disease support programs that complement and support those of existing carers such as GPs.

Last April HCF was awarded a prestigious CANSTAR CANNEX award for innovation excellence, for its launch of *My Health Guardian*.

Healthways Australia Managing Director, Tim Morphy, said: “To have 25,000 members with a chronic illness enrolled to participate in a little more 12 months is a remarkable achievement and a testament to the demand among HCF members for such a service.

“For the first time in Australia we have a truly scalable chronic disease support program, delivering results for those at most risk of hospitalisation,” Mr Morphy said.

“Chronic disease accounts for more than 70% of health care costs. With this service now up and running at such a large scale, our health coaches have an opportunity to make a real difference in the quality of people’s lives,” he said.

Top chronic conditions reported by *My Health Guardian* participants

CONDITION NAME	% PARTICIPANTS
Cardiac (Coronary Artery Disease, Atrial Fibrillation, Heart Failure, Angina Pectoris, Myocardial Infarction, Mitral/Aortic Valve Disorders)	74%
Musculoskeletal (Arthritis, Low Back Pain, Osteoporosis, Fractures, Muscle or Tendon, Dislocations, Sprains, or Strains, Musculoskeletal Disorders)	73%
Diabetes	51%
Gastroesophageal Reflux Disease	50%
Hypertension (High Blood Pressure)	37%
Pain	30%
Hyperlipidemia - Hypercholesterolemia (High Cholesterol, High Blood Fats)	23%
Mental Health (Depression, Mood Disorders)	20%
Cancer	19%
Lung (Asthma, Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease, Pneumonia)	18%
Inflammatory Bowel Disease and Irritable Bowel Syndrome	10%

[Note: percentages add up to more than 100% as most participants report multiple conditions.]

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