



The Domino Effect of Investing in Primary Care: What Employers Need to Know About DPC

Employers dedicate extraordinary resources to medical care for their employees, but are those resources making a difference? Improving employee health outcomes has only become more difficult in the current health system, with increased and targeted spending rarely producing the desired outcomes. There's no better time for employers to take matters into their own hands and invest in Direct Primary Care (DPC) as a benefit for their employees.

The Primary Care Problem

The Primary Care Report Card, recently released by The Milbank Memorial Fund, measures the United States' progress in implementing high-quality primary care, highlighting the urgent need to increase investment in high-quality primary care. The report finds that dollars spent in primary care has continued to decline over the past decade, leading to fewer adults getting the care needed to address long-term health needs, and hastening the declining health status for the over 130 million Americans with complex and chronic conditions.

Primary care investment is proven to reduce the overall cost of healthcare in several ways. First, it increases the chances of early intervention for conditions that can be caught and addressed before they become problematic. According to a recent study by the Patient-Centered Primary Care Collaborative, for every dollar spent on primary care, companies can save up to \$13 in downstream healthcare costs. This approach especially applies to complex and chronic conditions where gaps in care lead to costly episodes. Considering that 60% of Americans have at least one chronic condition, and more than 40% have two or more, high-quality preventative care will continue to become increasingly important.



Primary care also impacts what employers spend on healthcare by redirecting where care is delivered. When patients have better access to primary care, they are less likely to go to urgent cares, specialists, emergency rooms and be admitted into the hospital. For example, the cost of treating a urinary tract infection (UTI) at a hospital emergency department averages more than \$2,000, whereas in a primary care setting it typically costs about \$300 (and much less in a Direct Primary Care practice). Ultimately, increasing primary care spending leads to a reduction in emergency room visits and a decrease in outpatient surgery. In the most conclusive study of its kind to-date, in 2020, Milliman published their findings on the impact of Direct Primary Care for employer-sponsored populations. In the analysis, employees who engaged with a DPC had 40% fewer ER visits, 20% fewer hospitalizations, and 13% lower total healthcare utilization.

While most employers who offer a health plan to their employees may believe they are offering employees adequate primary care, accessing a Primary Care Physician (PCP) can be a challenge even for people with insurance due to physician shortages and demographic shifts. The average wait time to see a family medicine doctor is 20 days, and most practices do not offer care outside of normal business hours. Patients with urgent or after-hours needs are most likely forced into an urgent care or ER setting, where the clinician doesn't know their history or health goals. Worst of all, if employees wait for their provider to become available, they risk a much more severe issue. Ensuring that employees have access to preventative care and short-notice or virtual appointments then becomes equally, if not more important in preventing major health episodes. So, as the supply of primary care physicians dwindles and the healthcare system continues to falter, DPC can directly address the issues of affordability, access, and quality of healthcare, while improving member satisfaction.

Direct Investment in Primary Care

While primary care can be a solution to a lot of our healthcare problems, it comes with a host of challenges in the United States, especially when insurance comes into play. Patients can't get timely access for their healthcare needs, and doctors don't have the time to spend with patients, due to large panels, typically exceeding 2,000 patients. It doesn't have to be this way. Imagine affordable healthcare with unlimited access to a primary care doctor that you can see today, or text if it's a simple issue. No more struggling with high premiums and limited access to care, anxiety over co-pays and future bills, or waiting months for an appointment. DPC is a game-changer for patients, clinicians, and employers.

Panel Size Comparison



- Traditional Primary Care
- Direct Primary Care

Because DPCs see about 75% fewer patients than traditional PCPs, they have the time to address root causes of health issues, and are available when patients need them. Patients have a strong relationship with their primary care clinician so they feel comfortable checking-in regularly rather than delaying seeking care to the point when conditions become severe. This dedicated resource that patients have via the benefit of DPC provides the reassurance of care when something goes wrong and does so at a reduced cost. By choosing DPC, you make a direct investment into your employees' health.

Why should you add DPC to your benefits?

1. Cost savings

The average American family spends over \$11,000 annually on healthcare expenses! Offering DPC saves employers money in the short term by shifting the site of care, and in the long run due to better employee health and management of chronic conditions. According to a study conducted by the Society of Actuaries, companies that offered DPC experienced a 13% reduction in total healthcare costs in the first year. In a world where healthcare expenses are skyrocketing, this could be the difference between staying competitive and being forced to shift costs.

2. Healthier and happier employees

Direct Primary Care encourages employees to build a strong relationship with their DPC clinician. This, in turn, means employees are more likely to seek preventive care, decreasing the risk of chronic conditions that may lead to costly treatments and lost productivity. Five chronic diseases or risk factors—high blood pressure, diabetes, smoking, physical inactivity, and obesity—cost US employers \$36.4 billion a year because of employees missing days of work. The Milken Institute report also found that employers could potentially save up to \$1 trillion in lost productivity per year by investing in primary care.

3. Employee engagement & satisfaction

A comprehensive employee benefits package, including Direct Primary Care, leads to higher satisfaction and engagement levels at work. Up to 80% of employees surveyed indicated that their opinion of their employer increased significantly and that their health improved, when they were offered access to DPC. Offering a DPC benefit gives your company a competitive edge that appeals to health-conscious candidates who prioritize their well-being.



Hint Connect

Hint Connect brings together a curated national network of independent Direct Primary Care (DPC) providers with consolidated enrollment technology and expertise in DPC benefit implementation. With Hint Connect, employers and innovative health plans can improve access to primary care, cut healthcare spend, and improve employee perception of health benefits through a plug-and-play DPC solution.

Learn more at connect.hint.com.

References

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[The Health of US Primary Care: A Baseline Scorecard Tracking Support for High-Quality Primary Care, February 22, 2023](#)

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[Direct Primary Care: A unique healthcare solution for employers, April 2021](#)

