

## ANALYTICS IN ACTION

# IMPROVING EMPLOYEE MENTAL HEALTH SOLUTIONS THROUGH THE POWER OF DATA ANALYTICS

In 2018, the National Alliance on Mental Illness found that 47.6 million adults in the U.S. experienced a mental health condition — with anxiety, depression and substance use disorders being the most common. However, the dialogue about mental health has shifted and the stigma once associated with it has started to decline.

Now, more than ever, individuals and organizations are willing to discuss mental, emotional and psychological health concerns. Employers recognize that the health of their employees goes much deeper than just physical well-being and are working harder to support their overall health. Employers understand the social, physical and financial impact that mental health has on an individual's personal and professional life and on, by extension, their business and bottom line.

Partners like HDMS are critical to companies that want to understand the impact mental and behavioral health have on their business and workforce. HDMS uses data analytics to identify trends, insights and opportunities for improvement that can lead to healthier employees, higher productivity and reduction in costs.

Recently, a national retail employer (the client) partnered with HDMS to understand the prevalence and resulting impact of mental health conditions on the company and its employees.

## The Challenge



The client was interested in identifying patterns within their claims data that would help them make informed decisions regarding health care services, benefits and corporate policies related to health.

### SPECIFICALLY, HDMS WAS ASKED TO:

- Provide an overview of the mental and behavioral health of the client's members to determine the most common conditions affecting their population
- Provide insights on affected members receiving needed support, such as medications, counseling services, check-ups and preventive screenings
- Identify potential connections between mental/behavioral health disorders and employee productivity
- Define areas where quick, cost-effective solutions could be implemented for fast, positive outcomes that can be expanded in the future
- Prove or disprove the client's assumptions about employee benefits usage, especially for certain services

## The Findings



After an in-depth analysis, HDMS was able to provide the client with some significant and surprising results:

- 25% of all members who had a medical claim during the year had a mental/behavioral health or substance abuse-related diagnosis\*  
*\*This population represents 12.4% of the entire workforce (regardless of claims history). The prevalence of mental/behavioral health or substance abuse-related disorders in the population without a medical claim is not known.*
- The affected members were primarily women
- Over the last three (3) years, mental/behavioral health or substance abuse disorders among members increased by 6.8%, which led to a cost increase of 7.7% per member, per month (PMPM)
- Depression and anxiety disorders were the most common conditions affecting the population, comprising more than 50% of all mental health conditions
- Depression and anxiety were responsible for most of the client's mental/behavioral health-related costs: nearly 70% of medical and 65% of pharmaceutical costs
- HDMS identified correlations between mental/behavioral health-related claims and employee sick days, performance metrics and staff turnover, which were used as measures of productivity
  - Less than 33% of employees with depression had been treated with psychotherapy or counseling – even fewer with anxiety disorders (approximately 15%)
  - Only 11% of members taking medications for any type of mental/behavioral health condition had been treated with psychotherapy or counseling

The client was surprised to learn about the low utilization rate of psychological services. They assumed that employees would take advantage of a health plan with rich psychotherapy benefits at very low “out-of-pocket” costs, but the data showed otherwise.

## The Takeaway



**The client was able to identify areas for quick interventions and make well-informed and data-driven policy decisions that could make small positive changes in workforce behavior and improve targeted communications in the future.**

The analytics presented by HDMS had valuable lessons for any company interested in improving the overall health of their employees while controlling costs:

### **Communicate clearly and frequently**

Ensuring that employees have a clear understanding of their health benefits and available resources can improve plan engagement and foster healthier behaviors.

### **Cultivate a stigma-free culture**

Creating a work environment that allows employees to openly discuss mental health concerns or allows for free mental health days helps improve employee health while reducing absenteeism.

### **Encourage regular doctor visits**

Regular physician visits reduce the likelihood of undiagnosed conditions and supports overall member health.