News Releases

The 20th Anniversary of The Sanofi Canada Healthcare Survey reveals surprising facts

Employees not as happy with health benefits as past years& are more willing to give access to personal data

MONTREAL, May 29, 2017 /CNW Telbec/ - The 20th anniversary of *The Sanofi Canada Healthcare Survey*, Canada's premier survey on health benefit plans, released today, brings to light that there is still much opportunity to learn from and improve employee health benefit plans. This year's survey highlights that barely half (53%) of employees say their health benefit plan meets their needs extremely or very well, down from 73% in 1999 when the question was first asked. Surveyed employees would like more flexibility in their benefit plans, and strongly support coverage for products or services that typically are not covered today, such as screenings to determine personal health risks, coaching sessions from health experts and adult vaccinations (see statistics below).

A clear majority (70%)—up from 58% just a year ago—would also consent to their benefit plan's insurance carrier accessing their personal claims data (for instance, the drugs they are taking) in order to receive personalized information to help them manage their health (for example, information about their personal conditions).

Traditional versus flex -
Currently, 77% of employees report having traditional benefit plans, which define what is covered and the levels of coverage. However, 54% of employees would prefer a flex plan, where employees can choose types and levels of coverage. Health spending accounts (HSAs), which provide employees with a certain amount of dollars every year to spend as they wish on allowable health-related items or services, are another way to bring some flexibility into benefit plans. Employees with HSAs are more likely to agree that their plans meet their needs very or extremely well (60% versus 50% among those without HSAs); currently, 31% of employers offer health spending accounts, increasing to 47% among employers with 500 or more employees.

Chronic disease gaps and personalised treatment through genetic testing -
Year after year, employers significantly underestimate the presence—and therefore likely the impact—of chronic disease in the workplace. More than half of surveyed employees (57%) report having at least one chronic disease or condition (such as depression or high blood pressure), climbing to 72% among those aged 55 to 64. Yet plan sponsors estimate that just 32% of their employees have a chronic condition.

More than a third (37%) of employees with chronic conditions take three or more medications on a regular basis and are therefore the most frequent users of drug benefits plan. A convincing 73% of them would be interested in coaching from a pharmacist to learn more about their medications and conditions, if this were covered by their benefit plan.

While the science is still in early development, 67% of employees are interested in a simple form of genetic testing (using a cheek swab) to help doctors prescribe drugs that are the most likely to work for them. This increases to 76% among those taking three or more medications.

Interest levels are high to participate in the following health risk screenings: for cancer (83%), heart disease (80%) and diabetes (71%). As well, employees are likely to take advantage of coverage for vaccinations to prevent disease, particularly for tropical diseases associated with travel (79%) and shingles (68%).

Impact on stress management -
When we look at personal behaviours that are considered contributing factors for chronic disease, 22% of surveyed employees report that the workplace negatively impacts their ability to manage stress. This climbs to 44% among those who are dissatisfied with their current jobs. Some other behaviours negatively affected by the workplace include sleep health (16%) and eating healthier foods (9%).

Work-life balance appears to be a factor: 49% agree it is increasingly difficult to juggle work and life responsibilities, up from 35% in 2002. Perhaps as part of efforts to improve work-life balance, 48% of employees work through lunch; however, this further increases the risk or impact of chronic disease due to distracted eating (which can lead to overeating) and reduced physical activity.

Fifty percent of employees agree their employers effectively help employees manage stress; unfortunately, 31% report that workplace stress has been so overwhelming in the past year that they have felt physically ill at times.

Positive ripple effect of wellness -
More than four out of five (86%) employees say they work in environments that encourage wellness are satisfied with their jobs, compared to 62% among employees working in environments that do not encourage wellness. Employees in wellness-oriented work environments are also much more likely to agree that their health benefit plan meets their needs extremely or very well (62% versus 43%).

However, barely half of employees (53%) agree their current work environment or culture encourages health and wellness, down from 62% in 2012. For their part, 64% of employers feel their corporate culture encourages wellness, down significantly

from 90% in 2012, and 51% report offering specific wellness programs (such as onsite flu shots) or policies (such as flexible work hours). Just 31% of employers plan to invest more in health education or wellness in the next year, down from 51% in 2012 and 68% in 2011.

NOTE TO EDITOR: *The 2017 Sanofi Canada Healthcare Survey* is available for download at www.sanofi.ca.

Supporting quotes:

"We, at Sanofi Canada, are proud to be a long-standing partner in offering key insights that help evolve and address personal health management since we first launched The Sanofi Canada Healthcare Survey in 1997. We have witnessed major changes in the Canadian workplace over the past 20 years, but the value that employees place in their health benefit plans has remained constant. We all share in a vision to improve the health and productivity of the Canadian workforce, which in turn helps ensure the sustainability of our healthcare system."
Niven Al-Khoury, President, Sanofi Canada.

"We have to talk much more about the burden of illness, and not talk about benefits in silos. This information can be a powerful motivator for change."
Danielle Vidal, Director of Business Development, SSQ Financial Group

"With results that are clearly more favourable in workplaces that encourage health and wellness, it's disappointing to see a decrease in the number of organizations that encourage wellness. Are employers taking a sufficiently holistic view?"
Loretta Kulchycki, Vice-President, Group Marketing, Great-West Life Assurance

"The survey reveals an interplay between benefits, wellness, job satisfaction and even cost management. These are really important trends that can help inform objectives for benefit plans." **Jennifer Elia, Assistant Vice-President of Client Experience, Integrated Health Solutions, Sun Life Financial**

"Wellness programs and [healthcare spending accounts] both give employees latitude to do more based on personal needs. These results clearly show that their availability boosts the perceived value of the overall health benefit plan."
Nathalie Laporte, Vice-President of Product Development, Marketing and Strategy, Desjardins Insurance

"Today's challenge is to find the balance between flexibility and complexity in an environment where more flexibility is being demanded. Technology has simplified doing business in virtually every industry, and has the power to make suggestions for plan members and guide their actions based on previous interactions and personal claims behaviour."
Jonathon Avery, Director of Product, Group Benefits, Manulife

Survey Methodology
The 2017 edition of *The Sanofi Canada Healthcare Survey* was initiated by TC Media Content Research Group on behalf of Sanofi Canada. The survey was conducted online from January 11-15, 2017. In total, a national sample of 1,500 primary holders of group health benefit plans completed the study. The data has been statistically weighted to ensure the age, gender and regional composition of the sample reflect those of the adult population according to the 2011 Census data. This survey was coupled with another online survey of 461 health benefit plan sponsors from across the country, from January 18-March 7, 2017.

About The Sanofi Canada Healthcare Survey
Now in its 20th year, The Sanofi Canada Healthcare Survey is Canada's premier survey of health benefit plans, capturing the opinions, concerns and behaviours of employees and employers with health benefit plans. The study is not possible without the sponsorship of Sanofi Canada, and additional support from Desjardins Insurance, Great-West Life Assurance, Manulife, SSQ Financial Group and Sun Life Financial.

About Sanofi – www.sanofi.ca
Sanofi, a global healthcare leader, has core strengths in diabetes solutions, human vaccines, innovative drugs, consumer healthcare, emerging markets, and Genzyme. Sanofi is listed in Paris (EURONEXT: SAN) and in New York (NYSE: SNY). Sanofi entities in Canada include the Diabetes and Cardiovascular Diseases Business Unit, the General Medicines, Established Products and Consumer Healthcare Business Unit, Sanofi Pasteur (vaccines), and Sanofi Genzyme (rare diseases, multiple sclerosis and oncology). Together they employ close to 1,900 people. In 2016 Sanofi companies invested $130 million in R&D in Canada, creating jobs, business and opportunity throughout the country.

SOURCE Sanofi Canada

For further information: NATIONAL Public Relations, Kristin Gable, Tel. 514-843-2378, kgable@national.ca