

## **Wichita a test for health program**

*The Wichita Clinic and MedEncentive will launch a new performance-based insurance program that could mean big savings for employers.*

**BY ANDI ATWATER**

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The Wichita Clinic, the state's largest multi-specialty physician group, has become the first medical group in the country licensed to distribute and administer a new pay-for-performance program that could save employers thousands of dollars in health care costs.

The clinic has joined with Oklahoma City-based MedEncentive, which has been testing its Internet-based program for more than two years. Chief executive Jeff Greene said the program has a documented employer return on investment of up to 800 percent.

The program, called MedEncentive Information Therapy Program, offers physicians and patients financial rewards for following recommended treatment guidelines for specific conditions.

Physicians will typically see a 20 percent premium over their normal office visit charges, while patients might see their entire co-pay reimbursed.

The program is being targeted initially to self-insured employers, who have the flexibility to implement such an incentive and who are eager to introduce money-saving opportunities.

Wichita Clinic's first client most likely will be itself. With more than 1,000 employees, the self-insured practice is ready to promote the program in the community through example and experience, chief medical officer Robert Kenagy said.

"Part of our job in this market is to convince the payers this is a good thing," he said. "In markets where this has been implemented, (it) has decreased the costs of delivery of medical care... primarily by decreasing hospital utilization. It has really saved the payers money."

Physicians like the program because it allows them to follow recommended guidelines while allowing for flexibility to use their clinical judgment, Kenagy said. "It's not cookbook medicine," he said.

Greene, an engineer who developed the idea in 2003 with two physician partners, test-marketed the program with a number of area businesses, including Oklahoma's largest health care organization and a municipality.

Wichita Clinic and MedEncentive are working on a marketing plan that will target some of the area's largest employers, many whom are self-insured, such as Boeing and USD 259.

Ultimately, the program could launch nationally, attracting traditional insurance companies as well as government payers such as Medicare. That will depend on how well it does in Wichita, MedEncentive's first commercial market, Greene said.

<http://www.kansas.com/mld/kansas/business/16380379.htm>