

**Minutes**  
**Owning Your Own Health Committee**  
**July 10, 2013 – 9:30 a.m.**  
**Scott Heyman Conference Room**

Present: Don Barber, Board of Directors Chair; Chantalise DeMarco, Mary Ann Sumner, Mack Cook Board of Directors; Jackie Kippola, Brooke Jobin, Tompkins County; Beth Miller, Kenneth Foresti, Excellus; Emily Mallar, CAP Connect; Andy Olmetti, City of Ithaca

**Call to Order**

Mr. Barber called the meeting to order at 9:35 a.m.

**Approval of Minutes of June 12, 2013**

The minutes of June 12, 2013 were approved as accepted.

Mr. Barber said the Consortium is in a unique position to make changes because it is not only the insurance company but is also member-owned and by being both the employer and the insurance company it provides the Consortium with the power to make changes. The “three-legged stool” includes the insurance company, the providers, and the patient and the goal of the Owning Your Own Health initiative is to tie all of that together with a focus on the patient side. At the last meeting there was a good discussion that centered around communication and the Committee decided to focus on back pain which in one of the Consortium’s significant claim areas and higher than the surrounding population. There was discussion of ways to improve communication and how to work with employees. A couple of committees were formed, one to identify resources, and another to identify mediums to communicate with people. After hearing back from those committees he suggested an action plan be developed with ideas for the next meeting.

Mr. Foresti distributed information from various sources on back pain. A document was also distributed that broke out diagnosis and the top five codes based on prevalence that were identified in the utilization information: back pain, depression, and anxiety. Mr. Foresti said the codes are fairly common among other similar populations. Ms. Miller said the presentation of the information showing this detailed breakdown will allow for Excellus to communicate to the group what some of the ways there are to prevent events that lead to some of the claims.

Mr. Olmetti spoke of the risk of repeat injuries and the importance of minimizing an initial injury. Ms. DeMarco asked if the information could be further broke down to show how many individual members are contained within the total numbers to identify the number of people who are having multiple visits. Ms. Miller said she would look into whether this type of breakdown could be done. She also said injuries such as a back injury could be further associated with another injury such as hip or knee injury but it would be difficult to extract this type of information.

Ms. DeMarco questioned whether the Consortium could set criteria for when care management could be requested for an individual (for having repeated injuries for example). Ms. Miller said the Consortium would not have access to the individual’s identifying information. Mr. Foresti said they would check on the number of individuals who have multiple issues and will go to their care management team to see how they deal with that and reach out to members. He will bring information to the next meeting and the Committee can discuss ways by which that can be improved. It was noted that the numbers presented are not inclusive of any Worker’s Compensation claims. Ms. Sumner said the list presented is vague and it would

be helpful to know more about what is included in each of the codes and gave a chiropractic care as an example.

Mr. Barber summarized the discussion and said in trying to figure out where to focus, it could be on prevention that would include a strategy for repeat injuries and whether claims are resulting from members or family members. He said this goes back to the intent of this Committee to create a culture where everyone within the community is made more aware of how important a healthy back is.

Mr. Barber said following the last meeting he spoke with the Town of Caroline's Worker's Compensation carrier who provided information and said they are willing to collaborate. They may be able to be used as a resource because they would be significantly benefited by doing this as well.

He asked the group tasked with communication to report on their findings since the last meeting. Ms. Jobin said she did not have a recommendation on how to better communicate with employees. Effective communication can be difficult considering the nature of employees work and access to email or written communication. County Personnel has tried several different ways to communicate with employees and some communication works better than others depending on content. Samples provided included e-mail to all employees and some employees who don't open the email or who don't read the email. Sending paper communication is not considered to be green and again some employees do not read the communication or follow-up on learning about any of the opportunities that are being offered. She said she is open to hearing any suggestions other members have that would improve communication to members.

Mr. Barber said Wegmans has their employees paying attention to a stretch break. Ms. DeMarco said Wegmans has proven to its employees that it is committed to these kinds of things and that is a big trust issue that needs to be built here if employees are going to participate in this. They are one of the top companies in the country because of the way in which they run their business and the way they value their customers and employees. She said this is something that needs to be modeled in the municipal environment. There was discussion of the importance of creating awareness. Ms. DeMarco said one of the biggest issues she sees is that municipalities do not seem to want to give up their time to invest in employees to invest in this and that is the culture that needs to change. She gave an example of allowing an employee to participate during the work day versus choosing between this and a running a personal errand. She stated not allowing the employee to participate during work time does not prove to the employee that the employer is invested in the wellness initiative it is pushing.

Ms. Sumner asked if the leadership of the Consortium can demonstrate to themselves this is a good investment. She said it takes a lot of time and a big investment on the part of employers. Mr. Barber said the projections now for healthcare costs are such that people will be working all year long to pay for health care if something different isn't done. The Consortium is in a place to do something and it will involve a large culture change. Ms. Sumner said she believes involving the employees in the discussion is important. Mr. Olmetti agreed and said it is important employees understand the full picture of the costs and consequences of not taking care of oneself. Ms. DeMarco suggested creating a pilot project to begin to motivate employees.

There was discussion of the long time it would take to see a payback from this culture change but if nothing is done the direction will not change. Ms. DeMarco said sometimes the

payback and investing in education and changing the culture of the employee/employer could impact other areas that aren't even being focused on such as anxiety. She said she would provide the Committee with a list of trainings that are offered by the unions in areas such as health and safety.

Mr. Barber said the next step is to create an action plan to work on the areas that have been mentioned such as ergonomics for sitting. He said the Board of Directors, as the leadership of the Consortium, could be leaders and make it a culture within the Consortium and a Board that is actually doing it. He said if management can make this culture change a priority it will be easier for members to embrace. Work can also be done with Worker's Compensation carriers and union trainings could be incorporated.

Mr. Foresti suggested as a baby step for a 12-month period doing a healthy back information series once per month. Ms. Jobin said she would send this to employees. Ms. Miller said the Excellus landing page has a great deal of important information and can be accessed through the Consortium's website.

Mr. Cook said he, too, has not figured out how to communicate to employees. He said if he forces employees in this direction it will not work. He thinks it has to be "pier to pier" with all members looking at their own departments and identifying which would be the most receptive to this. He said he cannot sell this but if he can sell it to a department director and get a mass of employees involved management could then take a step back. Mr. Barber stressed there should be a focus on changing the culture and not on an outcome of saving money.

Mr. Foresti said a motto of a company he previously worked with was "getting people back to life". They were always trying to find what people were passionate about such as golfing, tennis, hiking, and hunting and provided resources for individuals to keep healthy doing the things they enjoy. Mr. Foresti suggested the Consortium come up with a tagline to try to market itself as there is a marketing component that is important. It was suggested there could be a regular communication to employees about what they do to keep themselves healthy for hobbies and another could be occupational. Ms. Kippola noted that because depression and anxiety were also identified other activities could be encouraged that would reduce stress levels. Mr. Cook suggested the focus be on the well-being of its employees and not as much on the insurance component and that communications be engaging and be focused on activities people enjoy. Another suggestion was made that communications include humor as a way to engage members.

Mr. Foresti will put together information for the next meeting based on humor and hobbies. Ms. Miller said she will communicate with Worker's Compensation to see what programs may already exist and will look into what posters or brochures are available.

It was agreed that Mr. Foresti will prepare a monthly circular to present at the next meeting, Mr. Barber and Ms. Sumner will communicate with the City's Worker's Compensation carriers, and Mr. Foresti will provide Mr. Barber with something on improving sitting posture that can be shared at the next Board of Directors meeting. Betty Falcao and Beverly Chin will be invited to attend the next meeting.

### **Next Meeting**

The Committee established the second Wednesday at 9:30 a.m. for a regular meeting schedule.

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At the last meeting Mr. Cook reported on exciting programs that are taking place in Batavia and extended an invitation to visit there and meet in Batavia with the City Manager. Mr. Barber asked who would be interested in attending. Mr. Barber, Ms. DeMarco, and Mr. Cook will travel to Batavia for this meeting that Mr. Cook will schedule.

**Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at 10:40 a.m.

Respectfully submitted by Michelle Pottorff, Administrative Clerk