



SURVEY FINDS MANY EMPLOYEES BLIND TO VALUE OF VISION BENEFITS

Almost half of U.S. employees are not fully taking advantage of their vision benefits, potentially putting themselves at greater risk for costly eye problems and systemic diseases. In fact, 24% of U.S. workers do not enroll in their employer's vision plan, and 30% of those who do enroll do not use their coverage to receive a comprehensive eye exam for themselves, according to a new survey from Transitions Optical, a manufacturer of photochromic eyeglass lenses.

"While all employees surveyed reported access to a vision benefit through their employer, they were less likely to enroll in vision than medical and dental benefits," says Pat Huot, director of managed vision care at Transitions Optical. "This is a serious lost opportunity for employers to help lower potential health care costs and boost productivity."

One of the most common reasons that workers cited for not enrolling in an employer-sponsored vision plan was not having vision and eye problems (22%), showing a lack of understanding of the importance of preventative eye care for overall health and eye health. Among the employees who enrolled in a vision plan, only 21% indicated diagnosis and management of chronic diseases as a reason.

Effective benefit communications could help to improve employees' understanding and encourage enrollment in vision insurance. At least 30% of all employees felt their employer did not take the appropriate steps to make sure that employees understand their vision benefits. Additionally, half of all employees were not sure what eyeglass lens options were included in their vision coverage, but survey responses showed that having a greater understanding could increase enrollment and utilization of the benefits. Among the workers whose employer communicates about vision benefits, only about 25% said their employer includes information about the importance of eye health.

"Employers have a lot of concerns on their minds when it comes to promoting the health and productivity of their employees, and [they] may take for granted that their employees understand the full value of their vision benefit, especially when it comes to vision wear," Huot says. "Today's eyewear can do a lot more than correct vision, with features to protect the eye by blocking UV and reducing eyestrain and fatigue by blocking glare."

The survey results also demonstrated some ethnic and racial differences in behavior and attitudes toward vision insurance. Asian Americans were more likely than whites to enroll in their employer's vision insurance. African Americans and Asian Americans were more likely than whites to say they did not enroll because their eye or vision problems could be addressed by their primary care physician, or that their employer did not explain the vision coverage well enough. Hispanics were more likely than African Americans to cite providing eye care for their family as a reason for enrolling in their employer's plan.

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