

Healthways SilverSneakers(R) Fitness Program Proven to Reduce Health Care Costs of Members with Chronic Conditions

September 16, 2008 10:01 AM ET

Groundbreaking Studies Focus on Benefits of Program for Those with Diabetes and Depression

NASHVILLE, Tenn.--(BUSINESS WIRE)--Sept. 16, 2008--Healthways, Inc. (NASDAQ: HWAY) announced today that, according to recent studies, older adults with diabetes who participate in the Healthways SilverSneakers(R) Fitness Program are admitted to the hospital less often, have lower inpatient care costs and significant reductions in their overall health care costs after only a year. Greater participation in the program is also associated with significantly lower risk of depression, according to recent studies published in *Diabetes Care*, the journal of the American Diabetes Association(1), and the *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*.(2)

The studies are a continuation of research funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and conducted by Group Health and the University of Washington (UW) that looked at nearly 5,000 SilverSneakers participants over a two-year period.(3) Researchers examined whether the health care use and the impact on health care costs for older adults participating in SilverSneakers--found in previous studies--also applies to those participants with chronic conditions such as diabetes and depression who have the most to gain from regular physical activity.

"These studies are proof, once again, of the dramatic positive impact physical activity and prevention can have on the economic burden that chronic conditions place on older adults, the health care system and on our society," said Healthways president and CEO Ben R. Leedle, Jr. "You have the obvious cost savings, which are outlined in these two important reports, but SilverSneakers also enables older Americans to get more out of life, to interact socially, and to reclaim an element of freedom that may have been fading for them."

In the first study, "Health Care Use and Costs Associated with Use of Health Club Membership Benefit in Older Adults with Diabetes," participants' healthcare costs were compared to those of a control group of the same age and gender who were not taking part in SilverSneakers.

Key conclusions from this in-depth study include:

- Lower total health care costs - Older Medicare beneficiaries with diabetes who participated in SilverSneakers had notable reductions in total annual health care costs after both one year in the program (-\$1,633) and two years in the program (-\$1,130) compared with non-participants. Even those who visited less frequently in year two still saw health benefits.
- 29% lower hospitalization rate - The cost savings were largely attributable to fewer hospital admissions and lower inpatient care costs with those hospitalizations.
- More participation equals greater savings - SilverSneakers participants who made an average of two or more visits a week in year one had significantly lower adjusted total health care costs in year two (-\$2,141) than those who made fewer than two visits per week.
- Increased preventive care - SilverSneakers members utilized more preventive services.

The study suggests that the health care cost reductions associated with participation in an exercise program for older adults in general also apply to older adults with diabetes. In fact, the impact on total health care cost is seen earlier and is three times greater in this higher risk group.

In the second study, "Depression and Use of a Health Plan-Sponsored Physical Activity Program by Older Adults," researchers found that at least two visits per week to SilverSneakers classes during the first year were significantly associated with a lower risk of depression in year two. Depression affects between 5% and 10% of older adults seen in primary care and is associated with decreased adherence to exercise, diet and taking medication. This is the first study to examine the association between depression and participation in a health plan-sponsored physical activity program for older adults over an extended period of time.

Dr. Huong Q. Nguyen, assistant professor of biobehavioral nursing systems at UW, is the lead author of both studies and collaborated with co-author UW professor Dr. James LoGerfo and colleagues at Indiana University, Veterans Affairs, University of North Carolina, Dartmouth Medical School and the U.S. Army. The studies were conducted jointly by Group Health and the

UW's Health Promotion Research Center, with funding from the CDC and Group Health.

Developed in 1992, SilverSneakers is the nation's leading exercise program designed exclusively for older adults. It offers an innovative blend of physical activity, healthy lifestyle and socially oriented programming that allows older adults to take greater control of their health. The unique program is available at no additional cost to eligible Medicare members and is currently offered in 49 states, Puerto Rico and the District of Columbia at more than 3,000 participating locations.

About Healthways

Healthways, Inc. is the leading provider of specialized, comprehensive Health and Care Support(SM) solutions to help millions of people maintain or improve their health and, as a result, reduce overall healthcare costs. Healthways' solutions are designed to help healthy individuals stay healthy, mitigate and slow the progression of disease associated with family or lifestyle risk factors and promote the best possible health for those already affected by disease. Our proven, evidence-based programs provide highly specific and personalized interventions for each individual in a population, irrespective of age or health status, and are delivered to consumers by phone, mail, internet and face-to-face interactions, both domestically and internationally. Healthways also provides a national, fully accredited complementary and alternative Health Provider Network, offering convenient access to individuals who seek health services outside of, and in conjunction with, the traditional healthcare system. For more information, please visit www.healthways.com. For more information on SilverSneakers, call 480.783.9555 or visit www.silversneakers.com

About Diabetes Care

Diabetes Care is a journal for the health care practitioner that is intended to increase knowledge, stimulate research, and promote better management of people with diabetes. Topics covered are of interest to clinically oriented physicians, researchers, epidemiologists, psychologists, diabetes educators, and other health professionals.

About the American Journal of Preventive Medicine

The American Journal of Preventive Medicine is the official journal of The American College of Preventive Medicine and The Association for Prevention Teaching and Research. Published monthly, AJPM prints original research and review articles in the areas of prevention research, teaching, practice, and policy.

(1) <http://care.diabetesjournals.org/content/vol31/issue8/>

(2) [http://www.ajpm-online.net/article/S0749-3797\(08\)00381-4/abstract](http://www.ajpm-online.net/article/S0749-3797(08)00381-4/abstract)

(3) http://www.cdc.gov/pcd/issues/2008/jan/07_0148.htm

CONTACT: Healthways, Inc.
Tricia Grayson, 318-747-9470
tricia.grayson@healthways.com
or
Melissa Gibbs, 615-614-4466
melissa.gibbs@healthways.com

SOURCE: Healthways, Inc.