

## DECEMBER 2007 DHR/UHR NEWSLETTER

### Mission Statement

*The Health Services and Insurance Committee of the Retired Teachers of Ontario will provide a most cost effective, high quality and competitive Group Health Insurance Plan that meets the needs of the majority of the membership.*

This newsletter is intended to keep DHR's/UHR's current with matters considered at Health Services and Insurance Committee (HS&IC) meetings and current items which may be of interest to your District/Unit membership. Please feel free to use any of the following information when communicating with members at meetings or via local newsletters.

### Decisions from the HSIC Meeting, December 11-12, 2007

- 1) The Committee recommended that the 2008 contract with Johnson Inc. for administration, claims payment, communication and consulting services be sent to the Provincial Executive for review and signature by the appropriate persons.
- 2) The Committee approved the final draft of the 2008/2010 RTO/ERO Health Plans Booklet and the RTO/ERO Out-Of-Province/Canada Travel Booklet. The two Booklets will now be sent to the printers. Distribution of the Booklets is scheduled for February, 2008.

Please encourage your membership to read the material carefully to understand the benefits they are entitled to receive. Also, remind members to place the Booklets in a safe and known location as it will be three years until the next printing. Updates over this period of time should be placed in the Booklets when received and read.

If members need clarification to ensure that they are covered for specific benefits then they should contact Johnson Inc.'s Claims department before making any claims.

Members are encouraged to recycle (where available) their old Booklets to have only current information available.

- 3) Approval was given to accept the new Health Plans Enhancement Submissions Form, formerly known as Requests for Plan Changes. The form is available from Melanie Johnson at 18 Spadina Road Provincial Office. A pre-stamped envelope comes with the form to make it easier for DHR/UHRS, RTO/ERO Plan Members, District/Unit Executives to complete and return. A first reminder to all, that the April HS&IC meeting will be the initial screening of requests for 2009.
- 4) A welcome was given to the two new members of the HS&IC, Marg Couture, Second V.P. Provincial Executive, and Roger Pitt. An in-service orientation session was held the afternoon of December 10<sup>th</sup>. Johnson Inc. personnel participated in the session which was also attended by the entire HS&IC.

### **Items Pending Further Review**

- 1) The initial draft of the HS&IC Governance Manual was completed. A review of topics mentioned in the October newsletter was completed and discussion and acceptance of wording for the following important topics was accomplished: Document Retention, Member Disputes, Privacy Policy, Document Library, Management and Compliance and Committee Mandate. The next step is to have our legal counsel review the draft Manual for possible suggestions.
- 2) The ManuLife 2008 contract for Underwriting of the RTO/ERO Health Plans will be reviewed at the next meeting in February.
- 3) A report on OTIP's RTIP/ARM Health Plans was made by Johnson Inc. When their enhancements for 2008 are verified, they will be shared with all District Presidents and DHR/UHRs. Be assured that the RTO/ERO Health Plans continue to be the standard in the Retired Educators Insurance realm. A new chart comparing the RTO/ERO Plans with the RTIP/ARM Plans will be prepared early in the New Year.
- 4) The HS&IC Priorities were discussed and developed and will be confirmed at the February HS&IC meeting.

## **Additional Information Items**

- 1) UNIFUND HOME and AUTO Insurance – Johnson Inc.'s Senior Regional Vice President, Central Canada and the Service Consultant presented the 2007 update of the services offered to the RTO/ERO Home and Auto participants. 17.7% of RTO/ERO members have purchased the Home-Auto Plan. The retention or renewal rate is 96%. Several enhancements were announced which will be readily accepted by Home and Auto Plan participants. Districts who wish to have a representative of Unifund make a presentation at a District luncheon, District meeting, or annual meeting, please contact Mr. Brad Gajria of Johnson Inc. at [Tel:\(905\)764-4921](tel:9057644921); Toll Free: 1-800-268-5764 or [bgajria@johnson.ca](mailto:bgajria@johnson.ca). A minimum of 25 members is required for consideration of a visit.
- 2) A reminder to your District/Unit membership over the age of 65 years who require three or more prescription drugs, that a personal, confidential interview is available from their pharmacist upon request. Discussion will concern the correct use and cautions to be aware of in the use of the drugs prescribed. There is no financial charge for this service.

## **Drug Information and Update**

- 1) Safety Advisory on Abbott's Precision Xtra

Health Canada has issued an advisory regarding the potential for damage to the Precision Xtra blood glucose monitor. Abbott Laboratories has found that Precision Xtra Monitors distributed between May 2007 and August 2007 may experience damaged displays when dropped onto a hard surface.

Abbott recommends that patients keep their monitor in the wallet that is provided, as this provides protection against accidental falls. They also recommend the importance of performing a Display Check as outlined in the first section of the User Guide: "Important Information – Getting to Know Your Monitor's Features" section. If the monitor display does not match the picture exactly, the monitor should not be used. If you have any questions or need to replace a damaged monitor, contact the Abbott Customer Care Centre at 1.888.519.6890.

Source: Health Canada, October 2007

## 2) Exubera Discontinued Worldwide

Pfizer is discontinuing the sale of its inhaled human insulin product, Exubera, worldwide.

Pfizer had planned to introduce Exubera in Canada on October 24, 2007. Several factors contributed to the product's demise: poor sales in existing markets, a bulky delivery device, uncertain long-term risks, no therapeutic advantage over injectable insulin, and market share competition from other newly emerging classes of diabetes drugs. The further development of inhaled insulin products is questionable.

Source: Pharmacy Gateway, October 18, 2007

## 3) Prexige® Market Withdrawal

Health Canada is advising consumers that it has stopped the sale of the anti-inflammatory drug Prexige (lumiracoxib) in Canada and will cancel the drug's market authorization due to the potential for serious liver-related adverse events.

The drug, a Cox-2 selective inhibitor non-steroidal anti-inflammatory has been marketed in Canada since November 2006 for the treatment of the signs and symptoms of osteoarthritis in adults.

Prexige® was withdrawn from the Australian market in August. Regulators speculated that the higher dose employed in Australia and Europe (200mg-400mg/day) lead to the increase risk of adverse events. However, of the four reports of serious liver damage from Prexige® worldwide, two of them were at the lower dose, thus ending speculation that this is a dose-related effect. The withdrawal of this product leaves Celebrex® as the only COX-2 Inhibitor on the Canadian market.

Source: Health Canada, October 2007

#### 4) French Language Health Services

The provincial government is creating a new advisory council on health care issues facing the province's Francophone community. The French Language Health Services Advisory Council is mandated under the Local Health System Integration Act (LHSIA). The council will provide advice to the Minister about health and service delivery issues related to Francophone communities, and the ongoing development of policies and strategies that contribute towards helping Franco-Ontarians access, in French, the care they need.

The initiative is part of the provincial government's plan for innovation in public health care, building a system that delivers on three priorities – keeping Ontarians healthy, reducing wait times and providing better access to doctors and nurses.

Source: Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, November 26, 2007

The HS&IC members wish to send holiday greetings to all the District /Unit Presidents and DHR/UHRs and wish everyone a joyous and healthy New Year.

If You Want To Be Happy, Be. – Leo Tolstoy