



Ending Misdiagnosis  
in the Manufacturing  
Industry

# Executive Summary

The manufacturing industry has undergone a transformation in recent years. Changing dynamics, including consumer expectations and enhancements in technology has shifted 21st century plant consolidations, operations redesigns and site relocations.<sup>1</sup>

In the midst of these changes, employee engagement and development can unfortunately take a back seat in an effort to address increasing costs and consumer demands. Although employee engagement improvement plans can require numerous program and systems changes, unique benefits offerings can go a long way to improving satisfaction in the workplace, decreasing absences and lowering costs. Offering benefits aimed at minimizing instances of misdiagnosis can greatly reduce the stress that employees endure when faced with illness.

This paper focuses on the challenges facing the manufacturing industry today and offers solutions to help address the needs of employees in this space.

What's inside:

- Recent trends in the manufacturing sector
- The impact of absenteeism / presenteeism in the industry
- How innovative benefit design can help decrease health care costs
- Employee engagement and its role in program success

# Absenteeism in the Manufacturing Industry

**A**bsenteeism in the manufacturing industry proves especially detrimental to the productivity of the organization as a whole. Employees who fail to show up to work consistently, often because of an untreated or mistreated illness, suffer physically and financially. Absence, coupled with persistent symptoms, can take an enormous toll on employees.

For laborers, missed work leads to greater harm and stress than in most other industries. On average, employees in this industry miss nearly eight days per year. This number may not seem very high, but when these numbers are translated into production loss, they can be devastating to profits. According to the Gallup-Healthways Well-Being Index, absenteeism costs the manufacturing and production industries \$2.8 billion annually in lost productivity.<sup>ii</sup>

With Best Doctors, manufacturing firms gain the advantages of:

<b>ACCESS</b> ACCESS TO THE BEST MEDICAL MINDS IN MEDICINE	<b>QUALITY</b> BETTER CLINICAL QUALITY AND OUTCOMES	<b>VALUE</b> A COMPETITIVE, HIGH VALUE EMPLOYEE BENEFIT	<b>EMPOWERMENT</b> A WORKFORCE OF HIGHLY EMPOWERED HEALTH CARE CONSUMERS
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On the other side of the coin, many sick employees in this industry tend to report into work, often out of necessity, but fail to fully engage once they arrive. This concept, known as presenteeism, can be just as detrimental to productivity as absenteeism. Low engagement can lead to mistakes that harm the employee as well as the production line. Presenteeism tends to affect those who fear missing work due to financial and career-related repercussions.

The typical manufacturing employee deals with conditions associated with heavy lifting, repetitive movements, burns and chemical injuries. They are also

faced with illnesses of dependents, sometimes missing work to care for children or spouses. Their time is often more regimented than those in other industries, making it more difficult to schedule time away from work. Absences in this sector can also result in higher spending, due to the time and costs associated with training replacements.

## Rising Health Care Costs

According to a National Association of Manufacturers survey, employers noted rising medical and insurance costs as a top business challenge.<sup>iii</sup> Illnesses that go months or even years without correct diagnosis, or a chronic sickness with an incorrect course of treatment can cause employers' health costs to skyrocket. When employees face uncertainties about their health, it leads to unnecessary stress for the worker and increased costs for all parties. Employers are tasked with the challenge of reducing this uncertainty and helping employees take better control of their health, while simultaneously containing costs.

As costs are expected to rise through 2016, employers are looking to incorporate programs that help increase quality of care, assisting with cost reduction down the line. Employers look for benefits that can be tailored to their specific populations, allowing for a more personalized experience. Giving employees access to clinical advocacy and second opinion services can help alleviate the stress associated with increasing costs and give employees the peace of mind that comes with understanding their diagnosis and treatment.

## Targeting Rural Areas

Americans in rural areas often face a unique set of challenges when trying to obtain answers to their medical questions. Those living in remote and rural areas tend to lack access to medical expertise, contributing to an already fragmented health care system. In addition, rural adults are more likely than their urban counterparts to smoke and be physically inactive, leading to health complications and lowered life expectancy.<sup>iv</sup>

**30%** **OF MANUFACTURING MEMBERS** contact Best Doctors because they are questioning the need for surgery.

When faced with illness, it can be difficult to receive appropriate care without traveling to the nearest metropolitan area. In cases where travel is restricted, remote access to experts can relieve this burden while allowing the patient to access medical expertise from the comfort of their own home.

## Global Reach

Similar to the fragmentation that occurs in rural areas, companies with global populations need to ensure that all employees have access to medical expertise, regardless of where they reside. Some challenges that employers face when implementing global programs is understanding unique language needs and the various medical assistance programs that exist around the world. When expanding medical advisory services to global populations, it is important to consider the following to ensure program success:

- Choose a partner with connections to global resources to ensure support for any language
- Insist on a partner with a strong global presence to make sure that treatment recommendations are applicable in that employee's location
- Work with a vendor with a strong physician engagement platform to enable true global collaboration among experts with real time, centralized communication

## Employee Engagement

Particularly in the manufacturing sector, a robust engagement strategy is key to the success of medical advisory programs aimed at improving outcomes. The first step to building a strategy is understanding the makeup of each organization's population. For manufacturing, the majority of workers are blue collar, often working on a factory or plant floor. With this information, engagement strategies can be tailored to ensure awareness among workers who may not have access to a computer during the day, which can limit the success of digital communications.

Some populations have high responses to home mailings, while others tend to respond to on-site posters and customized information sessions. Since scheduling time for training can often be difficult for laborers, multiple on-site programs should be prepared to accommodate various shifts.

Trainings help answer the questions commonly asked by employees in this industry: What will I expect when I call? How long will it take? Do I need to go to a doctor's office to receive my report? These questions fall directly in line with the concerns outlined above, and help reduce overall stress for the employee.

Another key to a successful program is Human Resources training and program advocacy. Support from managers and executives helps ensure that important information is transmitted to all employees, so that they may more effectively take advantage of services.

Employers exploring quality initiatives and clinical advocacy solutions should insist on turnkey solutions that are robust, yet provide opportunities for customization. This will provide a comprehensive, easy-to-implement program that is streamlined and speaks directly to their unique needs.



## PERSONAL STORY

One Best Doctors manufacturing industry member was diagnosed with uterine cancer. After having a hysterectomy, Chris' doctor told her she had early stage cancer and did not need chemotherapy or radiation. She contacted Best Doctors to review her biopsy and get a detailed case review.

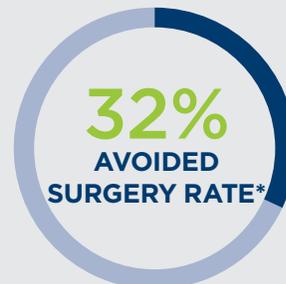
While waiting for the second opinion, Chris' treating physician re-reviewed her biopsy and determined that she actually had late-stage cancer which had spread to her lymph nodes. A couple of days later, she received the second opinion from Best Doctors, which confirmed the stage 3c cancer. "I firmly believe that if Best Doctors hadn't asked for a biopsy sample, the original lab would never have run the test again," Chris said.

Her oncologist and radiation oncologist recommended chemotherapy, followed by radiation, and then another round of chemotherapy. Chris felt that this was too intense of a plan, and worried that it would aggravate her digestive problems. She contacted Best Doctors again to ask about the risk of not following through with radiation. In the end, Best Doctors supported her decision to forego radiation.

Today, Chris is cancer-free and back to her normal activities. "Best Doctors served a really good role as an advocate," she said. "They were the voice of reason and they empowered me to be a better consumer of medical advice." Most important, however, was that Best Doctors retested the biopsy.

**"I really do believe that having Best Doctors may have saved my life."**

In 2014, Best Doctors Consultations in the Manufacturing Industry Resulted In:



\*In cases where surgery was recommended

# What Manufacturing Employees Say About Best Doctors

“I found the whole experience to be invaluable in helping to choose the best course of action for my illness. **I have already told many of my work colleagues and many friends about the benefits of using Best Doctors.**”

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“The Best Doctors final report, in structure and content, was outstanding and provided a much needed second opinion. It beneficially affected my treatment option and future course of action.”

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“My overall experience was outstanding.”

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“This was the **best health service experience I have ever had.** Fantastic.”

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“Having the Best Doctors review helped me clarify what was important. I also have a better plan for a way forward with a condition that will never go away, but may be more successfully managed.”

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“The Best Doctors expert review **reversed my cancer diagnosis** and prevented at least 17 chemotherapy sessions.”

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“Best Doctors gave me the comfort of really talking and being listened to.”

# Conclusion

The changing landscape of the manufacturing industry, coupled with increasing health care costs, has challenged employers to seek competitive benefits to help keep employees healthy and productive while at work. In the manufacturing industry especially, reduced absenteeism and increased productivity is key to meet the increasing consumer demands.

When considering health advocacy programs, use these considerations in your evaluations:

- Evaluate your employee population to understand unique needs and conditions. Are certain illnesses more prominent than others?
- Consider which condition areas represent your company's highest cost claims. Where is there room for improvement?
- Identify areas where gaps in care may exist. This may allow for better understanding of which programs to add / or eliminate.

By providing employees with answers, treatment recommendations and diagnosis clarification, costs are reduced and employees become better consumers of health care, empowering them to make more informed decisions regarding their health.

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<sup>k</sup>Kotelec, Michael. 2014. 5 Manufacturing Trends that will Shape the Market in 2015. <http://www.industryweek.com/technology/5-manufacturing-trends-will-shape-market-2015>

<sup>l</sup>Folger, Jean. The Causes and Costs of Absenteeism. Investopedia. <http://www.investopedia.com/articles/personal-finance/070513/causes-and-costs-absenteeism.asp>

<sup>m</sup>Moutray, Chad. 2014. NAM/IndustryWeek 4Q Survey: Manufacturers Had a Good Year and Expect 2015 to be Better. <http://www.industryweek.com/global-economy/namindustryweek-4q-survey-manufacturers-had-good-year-and-expect-2015-be-better?page=1>

<sup>n</sup>2012 – 2013. HRSA Area Health Resource File. <http://ahrh.hrsa.gov/>

<sup>o</sup>2014. Best Doctors Book of Business Data

# About Best Doctors

Best Doctors, Inc. is the trusted global medical resource for ensuring that individuals have the right diagnosis and treatment, helping to dramatically improve the quality of care and reduce costs. Founded in 1989 by two Harvard Medical School professors, Best Doctors serves more than 700 employers, health plans, and other clients, touching more than 30 million members in countries all across the world. Best Doctors has received accolades from the media and the medical community as the leading organization for connecting patients with the best medical care. [www.BestDoctors.com](http://www.BestDoctors.com)

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