

Health Risk Assessments:

First Line of Defense in Population Health Management

A powerful component of a health population management strategy is the Health Risk Assessment (HRA), which evaluates a population's health status and targets actionable programs to address identified risks. Whether implemented by employers or health plans, developing effective HRAs and mining the resulting data is a strategic means of harnessing healthcare costs and fostering consumer awareness of their own health state. Last month, the Healthcare Intelligence Network (HIN) polled its online audience to gauge the presence and power of HRAs in the healthcare industry.

Note: This abstract summarizes HIN's November 2005 online survey results. To order *HRAs: How the Healthcare Industry Is Identifying Risk Before It Becomes Reality*—a more detailed survey analysis with feedback from more than 200 respondents on the HRA's impact on their organizations and bottom lines, their innovative use of HRA data and incentives and the lessons they've learned during HRA implementation—call HIN toll-free at 888-446-3530 or visit <http://store.hin.com/product.asp?itemid=3289>.

HRA Data Holds Key to Stratification

More and more healthcare organizations are placing HRAs on the front lines of their population management efforts. Whether on paper or online, HRAs are being used by these companies as a screening tool to label an individual's health status. The findings from an HRA help identify a person's health risk status, the first step in mapping out a complementary wellness and/or disease management program.

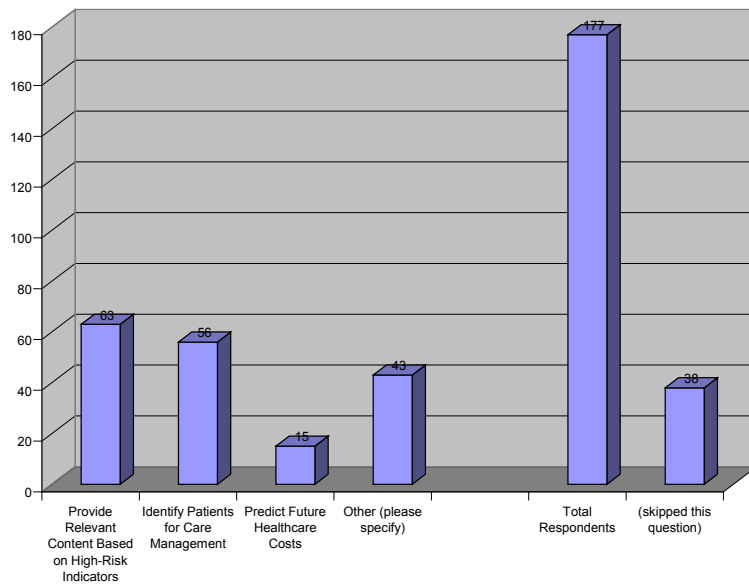
Low-risk participants judged to be essentially healthy after completing the HRA can be left alone or recommended to wellness and health management programs. Those shown to be at moderate risk may be offered the chance to enroll in lifestyle management programs, and respondents identified as high-risk are often referred to behavioral modification and/or disease management programs. Ideally, this stratification keeps healthy employees healthy, puts those on the threshold of a serious illness on the right path, and offers the chronically ill the opportunity to alter risky behaviors and learn to manage their conditions. The end result should be improved outcomes and reduced healthcare costs.

Of the 215 companies who responded to HIN's online survey, 129 respondents—60 percent—are already using HRAs to evaluate the health of employees or members. Of the 86 respondents who don't yet use HRAs, more than half—55 percent—expect to implement them in 2006. For now, completion of the HRA is largely voluntary, say 93 percent of the 186 industry representatives who answered this question. But to sweeten the pie, almost half—43 percent—offer their population incentives to complete the survey. These incentives range from cash rewards to gift certificates to discounts on healthcare premiums and fitness clubs.



December 2005

How Respondents Use Data from HRAs



The most popular use for data mined from HRAs is to obtain relevant content based on high-risk indicators, say 36 percent of the 177 respondents who answered this question. Thirty-one percent of respondents use the data to identify patients for care management programs, and almost 10 percent tap it to predict future healthcare costs.

According to one survey respondent from a hospital/health system, all of the above-mentioned uses for HRA data are valuable. In addition, she says, HRAs “raise awareness by employees of their risk. We use it as a teachable moment to encourage behavior change by linking them to risk-appropriate information and tools online.”

About a quarter of all survey respondents provided additional uses for HRA data, which are detailed in *HRAs: How the Healthcare Industry Is Identifying Risk Before It Becomes Reality*. For ordering information, please visit <http://store.hin.com/product.asp?itemid=3289> or call HIN toll-free at 888-446-3530.

We use the HRA for new hires to identify candidates to refer to the health coach.”
Corporate health consultants

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Gregg Lehman, president and CEO of Gordian Solutions, a firm specializing in population health management, says the real challenge of HRA use is identifying those below “water level”—those with one or more risk factors that have not yet become sick. Lehman’s strategies for effective HRA implementation and a case study in Humana’s in-house HRA development from Humana’s clinical consultant Marlene Sigwalt clinical consultant and research scientist Yan Zhang are detailed in *Mining Health Risk Assessments for Richer ROI and Results*, available at <http://store.hin.com/product.asp?itemid=3287>.

For further healthcare resources, please visit the HIN bookstore at <http://store.hin.com> or call toll-free 888-446-3530.

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