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EDITOR'S PEN

Gary Barg, Editor-in-Chief

Caregiver Thought Leader Interview: Jim Jones, President

Wellspring Benefits Group

Gary Barg: Jim Jones, I'm really glad to be talking to you right now with everything that's going on in the news about healthcare costs. What do caregivers need to know about where the gaps in the system are?

Jim Jones: Well, it seems like there's a whole lot of fragmentation that goes on today in healthcare, especially when you consider that many times caregivers are dealing with multiple physicians. And they may have someone they're caring for who has multiple chronic conditions. The good news is that there are lots of providers out there. The bad news is that none of them talk to one another. And, so you are kind of isolated. Caregivers need to have a Healthcare Quarterback that oversees all the different treatment protocols available from multiple physicians. We need to be able to take that fragmented system and consolidate it in order to have quality oversight over the chronic conditions, physicians and treatment protocols that could help the caregiver and the person they're taking care of lead far more productive lives.

Gary Barg: Okay. I love that phrase, Healthcare Quarterback. Let's delve into that a bit. What do you mean by that?

Jim Jones: There's a lot of over-medication that goes on; certainly unintentionally, but, because physicians work in such individual silos, they very seldom have any interaction amongst

themselves. If you're taking a loved one to a psychiatrist, the psychiatrist never has a conversation with an internist or a cardiologist. But, they may be prescribing some sort of medication that could have adverse reactions with some other type of medication. Or, you may have three or four different physicians prescribing a blood thinner.

The quarterback has the ability to say, "I'm going to communicate with each physician's office. I'm going to understand the diagnosis, and we're going to accumulate and aggregate all that information in one place."

Gary Barg: People are dying by mismanagement of medication.

Jim Jones: The amount of folks who are dying prematurely because they are not managing their disease effectively is staggering. To be able to manage morning medications and then be able to manage noontime or evening medications, with all these different instructions, becomes very cumbersome.

Gary Barg: Is that what you call chronic disease intervention and medication management?

Jim Jones: Let me start with the chronic disease intervention. When I was talking about the Healthcare Quarterback, this is really that process. It's not about just treating a particular chronic disease. It's about understanding the entire patient from a holistic standpoint. For example, let's say that someone is taking depression medication and also has diabetes. They then decide that they're going to stop taking their medication for their depression or even bipolar disorder. When they get off their medication, not only do we have a problem managing the psychological aspect of their disease, but we really need to get them back into a trusting relationship with a Healthcare Quarterback.

We need to give them the reason to get compliant with their depression medication. Not necessarily, Gary, because of their depression, but because we know if they're not going to maintain the integrity of their depression or their bipolar state, we know that their diabetes is way out of whack as well.

Gary Barg: So, is this the **Senior Saver program** we're talking about?

Jim Jones: Yes, and it really has a practical application for most families. Certainly the chronic disease intervention and the medication management. And, in addition to that, Gary, we also provide some substantial, pre-negotiated savings and discounts on dental and vision services, as well as medical equipment and hearing aids. It's a fabulous package for seniors and certainly one that, from a value proposition, we think is one of the best in the market today.

Gary Barg: So, I am a caregiver and I am just overwhelmed with my loved one's medication management issues, the different doctors, the different pharmacies, the costs, and out-of-pocket costs. I work with you and your Senior Savers program. How do you help me? How do you help my loved one?

Jim Jones: Fantastic question. We assign our patients a clinical pharmacologist and care coordinator with whom you develop a long-term relationship and who are going to call you at least once a month. We want this to be a long-term relationship, and you can't have relationships with people who are new every time you talk to somebody.

It's about having an authentic relationship where you will tell me as your care coordinator things you may not tell your loved ones. Why? Because you don't want to worry them, or be more of a bother. You know, it's amazing how many times people don't even share their concerns with their doctors. Gary, you've seen it and I've seen it. I saw it with my father-in-law not long ago. We went into a doctor's office with all these multiple symptoms he was having. When the doctor walked in with a big smile on his face and said, "Nick, how are you today?" what do you think his response was? "Oh, Doctor, I'm doing just fine."

Gary Barg: So, this is really a way for us to have oversight of our loved ones' medication, health, interaction, and disease management. It's terrific. Let me ask you the question, because I'm kind of curious—what does this cost?

Jim Jones: Well, the **Senior Saver program**, which includes the chronic disease intervention, medication management, dental, the vision, hearing, the medical equipment, is \$20 per month. If you're taking 10 different medications and your out-of-pocket for that is based on your copays, or \$100, then it's going to be \$100 with us, too.

Gary Barg: Tell me about the pre-packaged medication part of your plan.

Jim Jones: Just envision that it's Sunday night and you pull out the big tackle box, put it on the kitchen table and open it up. You've got 10 or 12 different little round brown pill bottles in there. You take all of those bottles out of the tackle box and line them up. Then you take your little Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday pill strip pack and try to do that yourself.

You've got to sort them out and organize them, and you've got to package them for the week. It's confusing, it's frustrating, and it's easy to make mistakes. It's highly error prone, so you very possibly are not taking the right meds at the right time. Part of our service is that our clinical pharmacologist sorts and pre-

packages your medication exactly like your doctor prescribed and overnights it to your front door in calendar shaped AM and PM dosage packs. You never have to worry about presorting and pre-packaging again, and it's all done and sent to your front door free of shipping by a clinical pharmacologist who just has you in mind.

Gary Barg: Jim, what's the most important single piece of advice you'd like to share with family caregivers?

Jim Jones: They don't have to be alone, and they don't have to take the burden of trying to manage chronic disease and medications on their own. You can let very qualified healthcare professionals take a whole lot of that burden off you. You just don't need to do it all yourself.

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