

**Benefits Advisory Committee (BAC)**  
**December 15, 2022**  
**Minutes of the Meeting**

[In these minutes: Employee Benefits Update; Cardiac Care at the University of Minnesota; Reviewing Determinations for Eligibility, Enrollment, or Other Administrative Matters; BAC Benefits Survey Review and Volunteer Recruitment; Announcement of BAC Vice Chair Election for 2023-24]

**PRESENT:** Dale Swanson (chair), Maria Hanratty, Scott Creer, Shannon Farrell, Cynthia Murdoch, Emily Becher, Kim Little, Carmen Sims, Jean Otto, Natalie Buckman, Greg Thurston, Susan Kratz, Mary Rohman Kuhl, Mary Blissenbach

**REGRETS:** Lynn Blewett

**ABSENT:** Amy Monahan (vice chair), Nikos Papanikolopoulos, Jennifer Schultz, Nancy Fulton, Kenneth Horstman, Jakub Tolar, Deb Pavlica, Steff Yorek, Christine O'Connor

**GUESTS:** Ryan Reisdorfer, health programs manager, OHR; Manda Keller-Ross, assistant professor, Medical School, Physical Therapy, and Rehabilitation Science;

**OTHERS:** Katie Kolodge, Karen Chapin, Laura Manydeeds Fiero, Linda Blake, Libby Stille, Rikita Davis, Shane Lueck, Kari Seime

Chair Dale Swanson welcomed the committee and members introduced themselves.

**1. Employee Benefits Update**

Ryan Reisdorfer, health programs manager, Office of Human Resources (OHR), provided an update from Employee Benefits, and highlights were as follows:

- Open enrollment has concluded and OHR had some good engagement with their webinar as 415 employees registered and 305 attendees. An additional 536 watched the recording. They also provided a home mailer in order to remind people to re-enroll for their FSA. A total of 10,379 people made changes to their benefits enrollment.
- Omada is a diabetes management and prevention program through Medica which was recently launched. There are currently 165 employees enrolled in the prevention program and 59 enrolled in the management program.

**2. Cardiac Care at the University of Minnesota**

Swanson introduced Manda Keller-Ross, assistant professor, Medical School, Physical Therapy, and Rehabilitation Science, who provided an overview of the research she is performing in her lab on menopause-associated risk factors in cardiovascular disease. Keller-Ross presented a lecture-style [slide deck](#) and highlights were as follows:

- There is a greater risk of hypertension and cardiovascular disease (CVD) in females after menopause.

- Many things can contribute to these conditions including menopause symptoms like hot flashes (they are moving away from the term hot flash).
- Women experiencing menopause at an earlier age (under 45) are associated with higher rates of heart failure.
- Blood pressure regulation is key in addressing or maintaining good heart health.
- Microneurography for muscle sympathetic nerve activity (MSNA) is the best way to measure sympathetic activity.
- Vasomotor symptoms (VMS: hot flashes/night sweats) are experienced by 70% of menopausal females. Women who experience VMS, have a 55% greater risk of CVD compared with women who do not experience VMS. The mechanisms of how VMS influences CVD risk, however, are unknown.
- Sleep restriction and sleep inefficiency are risk factors for CVD. Sleep disturbance is a menopausal symptom, experienced with estrogen depletion, but it is unknown if sleep difficulty is connected to CVD in postmenopausal women.
- Her summary of findings included:
  - Although we expected to see greater BP and sympathetic reactivity to a stressor with early age of menopause and in females who experience VMS, we observed no differences compared with their control groups.
  - We did find that women who reported sleep difficulty experienced greater sympathetic reactivity compared with females who do not experience sleep difficulty.

Swanson asked if there was an impact on cardiovascular health if women take oral contraceptives (hormones). Keller-Ross replied that those can be tricky as they have evolved over the years. Older contraceptives could elevate blood pressure. Newer contraceptives haven't seen a connection with cardiovascular health. Other hormone therapy can have a positive impact on cardiovascular health, so long as the patient is under the age of 60.

Reisdorfer asked if there are general questions or advice that women should be asking their doctors. Keller-Ross recommended being upfront about all of their symptoms because they sometimes feel that they are being irrational about their actual symptoms. There are real stigmas around many of these symptoms and conditions as women age.

### **3. Reviewing Determinations for Eligibility, Enrollment, or Other Administrative Matters**

Reisdorfer then provided an overview on determining eligibility in enrollment and other administrative matters. He presented a [slide deck](#) and highlights were as follows:

- Pre-tax benefits provide tax savings by allowing an employee to pay for their medical and dental rates, and eligible Flexible Spending Account (FSA) expenses, with money that is sheltered from taxes. This reduces the employee's taxable income and saves them money over time.
- The IRS has rules in place regarding pre-tax benefits plans and the University is required to follow the IRS rules. Pre-tax benefits plans do not allow for enrollments outside of open enrollment or without a qualifying event. Therefore, there is not a lot of flexibility.
- Eligibility and enrollment requirements include:

- New employees: 30 days from the date of hire to enroll or make changes to benefits.
- Remove/add dependents/spouse: 30 days from the date of qualified family status change to add/remove coverage.
- Add Newborn: 30 days from the date of birth to add a child.
- Dependent Eligibility Verification (DEV): Missed final deadline letter - 30 days from enrolled dependent
- Retiree Pre-65 Medical: Retirees have 30 days from the date active benefits end to return the Continuation of Coverage form. If they do not elect within 30 days, they do not have coverage.
- If there was a system error, entry error, correction, etc., the Benefits Administration Manager will review these situations and make a determination.
- The University and its vendors have processes for medical, pharmacy, and dental claim appeals.

#### **4. BAC Benefits Survey Review and Volunteer Recruitment**

Chris Kwapick, senate associate, University Senate Office, provided a brief overview of the proposed BAC benefits employee [survey](#). He noted that there have been some modifications to make the survey more accessible and possibly easier to navigate. Becher suggested that for ease of disseminating data that it be transferred to Qultrics and Kwapick said that he would connect with her after the meeting.

Swanson then asked for volunteers to review the results after the survey was complete and the following people agreed to review comments concerning the following vendors:

- Medica Elect/Essential - Greg Thurston
- Medica ACOs, Choice National, Choice Regional, and HSA - Greg Thurston
- Delta Dental - Linda Blake
- Virgin Pulse - Wellbeing Program - Jean Otto
- Pharmacy (Prime and Fairview Specialty) - To be determined
- WEX Discovery Benefits (FSA provider) - Jean Otto

#### **5. Announcement of BAC Vice Chair Election for 2023-24**

Kwapick informed the group that the committee will be holding elections for vice chair of the BAC at the next meeting. The chair is elected for two years (July 1, 2022 - June 30, 2024) and the vice chair serves a term of one year (July 1, 2023 - June 30, 2024). If anyone is interested in nominating themselves or another member for vice chair, Kwapick said they should inform him or Dale Swanson at their earliest convenience.

Hearing no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

Chris Kwapick  
University Senate Office