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How to Advise Your Health Insurance Clients — A Q&A With a Leading Expert

Ever since the economy collapsed, people all over the United States have been struggling with their health care decisions. As a trusted financial advisor, you may have even seen this struggle firsthand. As clients and prospects lose their jobs — and, therefore, their health insurance — they come to you seeking advice on ways they can get through the difficult times, and you must be prepared with the answers.

Martin Rosen, a founding member of Health Advocate, one of the nation's leading health care advocacy companies, co-wrote a book to help consumers better understand their low-cost options. ASJ talked to Rosen about how agents can use the book to help their clients, as well as to get an idea of the most important topics for agents to discuss with their clients and prospects.

Q: Our readers are predominantly insurance agents, many of whom have clients who are struggling with the very issues you discuss in your book — job loss, finding adequate health coverage, etc. How can agents use the information in this book to help their clients?

MR: The thing that I think is a pretty basic theorem of selling in general and that is adding value to your audience by bringing things to their attention and making yourself be seen as a resource. You want to not just sell something but be seen as a resource. Most of your readers are generally being looked upon as a resource. I know I've done it — I've called up an agent and I know they're resourceful, so I know they can help me with an issue that might not be directly related to what I bought from them. So there's strength there in building a relationship.

And I would go well beyond just people who have lost their jobs or people who have little or no coverage. There are parts in the book about taking care of yourself, finding cost-effective care, etc. that are broadly based in terms of applicability.

Q: In your book, you talk about taking charge of your own health — getting in shape, cutting out bad health habits like smoking, performing regular self-exams, etc. How much of a difference can that really make for people who are trying to save on their health insurance?

MR: Life and death — and I can give you tons of examples. One of the shocking things is how many people who are well-educated, who are smart, and who have achieved financial success have not done some things that could have contributed to a longer life, or are even doing things that could be shortening their life. The best example is getting some of the preventive exams. One of the best examples for women is mammograms for women after age 40, and for men, colonoscopy. It's shocking on one level, not that Americans would die from colon cancer — because even with a screening there are circumstances where someone, genetically, physically, something, the screening might not have made a difference — but in the large majority of circumstances, with a screening, it can catch something that can be

prevented.

There might be certain circumstances with a cost issue. But what we're trying to highlight in that chapter is the real importance of taking care of yourself. And there is study after study that indicates that these tests and these actions that we are recommending and that are being recommended by leading medical organizations contribute to reducing morbidity and mortality and truly save on health care. So even from an employer perspective, the cost of health care can be reduced greatly — bottom line.

Even when you listen to some of the national conversation going on in health reform. The theory is that when more Americans have access to care, then it will make a big difference not only in the quality of life for them and their family, but also to the health of the country. This will make care more cost effective for everyone, and could ultimately save money, just by increasing access to preventive care and general health measures.

Check out next week's issue of the Health Care Reform Watch e-newsletter for part two of this Q & A.

For more information or to order a copy of Martin Rosen's book, visit www.healthadvocate.com.

<http://www.asjonline.com/Issues/2009/10/Pages/How-to-Advise-Your-Health-Insurance-Clients.aspx>