



# Should employers cover GLP-1s? Three considerations from a chief medical officer



In both my role as a practicing physician and business leader, I shape clinical strategy for employers across the country and a large virtual primary care practice with hundreds of physicians. In these capacities, I have the privilege of caring for people managing chronic illnesses and have the opportunity to advise employers that grapple with complex questions and concerns. In recent months, weight management and the search for healthcare guidance on promising GLP-1 drugs has become a frequent topic of discussion. Patients are looking to improve their health and, ultimately, their quality of life, while employers are wondering how they should address GLP-1s as part of their health benefits offering.

The current swirl of debate in the news media and in the market raises questions about the cost and appropriate utilization of GLP-1s. This has left some employers pondering about whether they should cover these drugs at all. As HR (Human Resources) and executive leaders strive to make informed decisions about their company's policy and coverage, I consistently see good intentions from HR teams as they seek to care for employees in a financially sustainable way.

Forty-two percent of Americans are affected by obesity – a complex health condition that often includes comorbidities like diabetes and joint and heart disease.<sup>1,2</sup> Thus, obesity is a condition that can drive up healthcare costs and drive down quality of life and productivity. When you combine the prevalence of this condition and its resulting costs, the ramifications of how employers manage the GLP-1 question in their benefits design may be the most critical benefits decision they make this year.

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