

# Unify And Multiply Your Benefits Offering With Digital Health Content

## What to look for in a licensed online health & wellness library

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Health-related employee benefits are a key part of the compensation package and are highly valued by employees. A recent SHRM survey reported that health-related benefits are yet again the most important benefits employers have to offer.<sup>1</sup>

On the employer side, it is well-researched that improving employee and dependent health has direct benefits to the bottom line of the company. Improving health and well-being delivers multiple benefits including reducing presenteeism, absenteeism, and turnover, while improving productivity, creativity and employee satisfaction.

A review of current data sheds light on why health-related benefits are so important<sup>2</sup>:

- 60% of U.S. adults have a chronic disease, and 40% have two or more
- Unhealthy lifestyles are driving the risk of having and managing a chronic disease
  - Poor nutrition
  - Lack of physical activity
  - Tobacco use
  - Excessive alcohol use

Covid-19 ushered in some permanent changes to managing health care, and many companies are now expanding their health-related benefits to include telemedicine or telehealth offerings moving forward. Furthermore, with the mental health crisis our population is experiencing, many companies are expanding their coverage of mental health services.

Employer-sponsored health-related benefits have grown to now include:

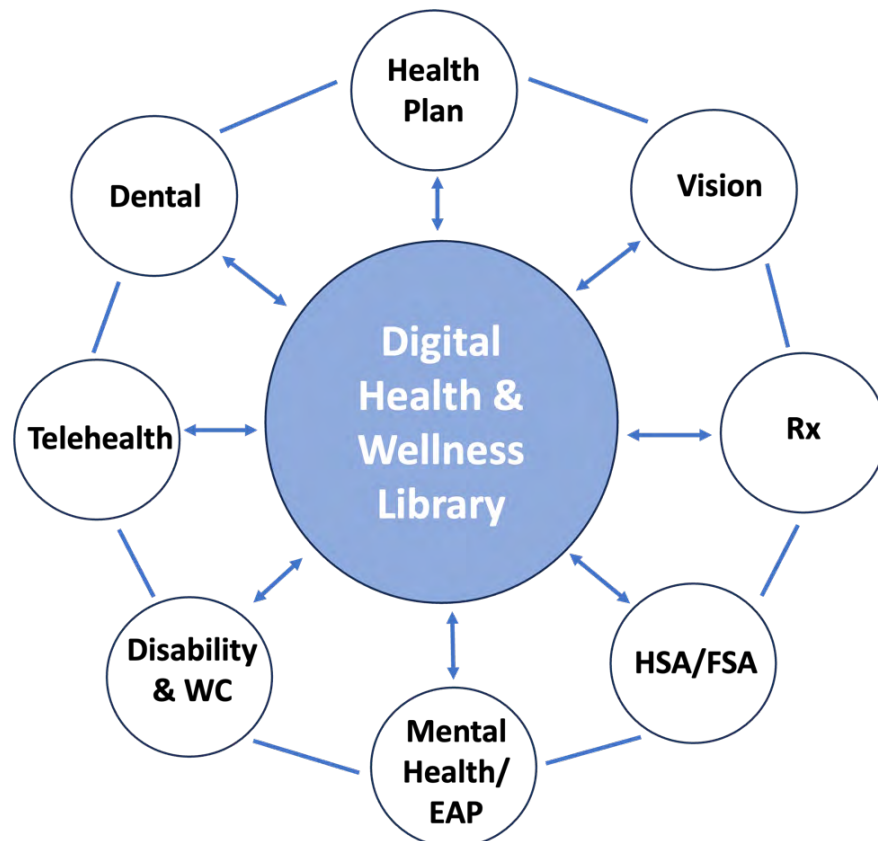
- Medical
- Dental
- Vision
- Telehealth
- Fertility and Family Planning Benefits
- Prescription Drugs
- Health Savings Account
- Flexible Savings Account
- Mental Health
- Employee Assistance Program
- Disability & Workers' Compensation

Employee health-related benefits are bundled together from multiple providers to create a robust benefits package. This provides the ability to mix and match offerings that fit with a company's benefit needs for their employees and dependents. However, there needs to be a unifying mechanism that ties all the health-related benefits together to produce a multiplier effect for the total benefits package.

The healthcare system is struggling to provide adequate care for our population which is experiencing a decline in mental and physical health. Even with robust employer healthcare benefits, many people can't access timely healthcare. America is experiencing a physician shortage, and it's only expected to get worse.<sup>3</sup> James Taylor of AMN Healthcare the largest healthcare staffing agency in the U.S. laments "the physician shortage can justly be characterized as a looming public-health crisis. Health care delayed is often health care denied, and a growing number of Americans are going to experience this unfortunate fact."

Eight in ten Americans look for medical information on the Internet.<sup>4</sup> Yet, the majority of searchers do not know how to evaluate the quality and validity of the source. Furthermore, the Internet is full of misinformation and is laden with advertising that promotes specific treatments, surgeries, medications, and healthcare providers and systems. More people say they are not taking care of their health, and a lack of information is partially to blame.<sup>5</sup>

Employees and their families need 24/7 access to a trusted source of health and wellness information to help manage their health and be a partner in their care. Health-related benefits providers need to provide those they serve with digital access to health information. The various health-related benefits providers offered to employees and their families are best served by utilizing the same trusted source of health and wellness information to create consistency across healthcare benefits. Furthermore, the Digital Health & Wellness Library needs to be housed in an accessible location. This is where we get into the multiplier impact that amplifies the health-related benefits package.





As an example, let's review a health-related scenario to understand the multiplier impact of a comprehensive Digital Health & Wellness Library that is placed at the center of the employer's health-related benefits ecosystem. Consider the common scenario

where an employee is experiencing chronic headaches. They will be encouraged to first access the Digital Health & Wellness Library to learn about different types of headaches. They might decide to try some of the techniques suggested by the articles and videos that include natural remedies and over-the-counter medications. If available, they can also access the company's Mental Health resources to help determine if stress is a contributing factor to their headaches. If the employee determines these interventions are not effective for their headaches, they can proceed with accessing the health plan to contact their primary care physician (PCP) who may discuss pharmaceutical solutions to manage their chronic headaches.

Along with discussing the medications with their PCP or pharmacist, the employee can review the medications in the Digital Health & Wellness Library. The employee can begin taking their prescription, and at the same time, continue to investigate whether their stress level can be reduced. In this scenario, there are multiple touch points with the Digital Health & Wellness Library reinforcing standards of care guidelines and supporting the employee with healthcare information – enabling them to take action and move their healthcare forward.



## What to Look for in a Licensed Online Health & Wellness Library

- Must be science-based, current, expertly vetted, and provided at an appropriate reading level, with medical terms clearly explained.
- Must be devoid of all advertising, be objective, and provide a range of treatment options for health conditions.
- Incorporate extensive tagging of content so people can easily access information with keywords, making navigation easy.
- Contain both articles and videos and with multi-lingual capability given the diversity of the U.S. population.
- Encompass content that is both broad and deep – thoroughly covering a wide range of health conditions so people can gain a full understanding of their health issues.
- Include comprehensive content about healthy lifestyles to support the adoption of habits that are fundamental to well-being: weight management, physical activity, stress management, sleep, musculoskeletal health, happiness, and resilience.
- Feature robust content on healthy eating, nutrition, and recipes that embed nutrition education as part of the recipe. People learn by doing – recipes that incorporate nutrition education helps people adopt healthy eating practices.
- Must be easy to integrate with benefit administration platforms for easy access and login capability.

Providing employees and dependents with accurate health and wellness information 24/7 puts them at the center of care, enabling them to be active participants in their health and well-being. Given the digital health revolution that is underway, the tools are available to make this a reality. It is key for employers to rethink the paradigm of health-related benefits and create an ecosystem that empowers their employees and dependents with tools that deliver on improving health outcomes.

### References:

1. *2022 Employee Benefits Survey, SHRM*
2. *Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)*
3. *Time Magazine, July 25, 2022*
4. *Online health information seeking among US adults: Measuring progress toward a Healthy People 2020 objective. Public Health Report, 2019*
5. *Edelman Trust Barometer Report, 2023*



**Andrea Bloom** is the Founder and CEO of [ConnectWell](#), a leading-edge provider of digital health and wellness content that is academically sourced and designed for a consumer audience. ConnectWell's content is packaged for digital delivery with rich graphic content, and written for a wide-ranging consumer audience. ConnectWell licenses its content for integration into the platforms of a broad scope of healthcare companies, employers, benefits providers and libraries to engage patients, employees, and members in their health and well-being.



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