

The Right #MentalHealth Drug for the Right Patient: Sun Life Financial supports personalized medicine

Sun Life is all about delivering innovative solutions to our clients! Sometimes mental health issues require medication; other times they require [Cognitive Behavioural Therapy \(CBT\)](#). At Sun Life, we are looking to support our clients in all ways.

Medication can be an important part of the treatment of a mental health illness, but finding the right one at the right dose can take time and cause harmful side effects. To help members and their physicians find an effective medication sooner, Sun Life is partnering with the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH) and Assurex Health on their IMPACT Study.

What's the IMPACT Study?

The IMPACT study uses Pharmacogenetics to identify genetic variants that can influence how participants respond to mental health medications, including any side effects. By testing the interplay between an individual's genes and how the body processes and responds to drugs, the IMPACT study may lead to faster, more effective treatment, which could help shorten the duration of a disability claim relating to a mental illness.

We understand that one size does not fit all when it comes to medication – and Sun Life's goal is to help provide access to testing that could facilitate optimal treatment as early as possible. Thanks to Pharmacogenetics, physicians can avoid 'trial-and-error' scenarios, when prescribing new medication.

Why is Sun Life offering access to this study?

Sun Life is all about helping clients achieve lifetime financial security, and helping them live healthier lives! In an era when illnesses relating to mental health represent a significant cause of disability absence in the workplace, it is more important than ever to explore additional ways of delivering patient-tailored medication, while containing rising plan costs.

"We are excited to launch this project. It represents an ideal mix of innovative technology in healthcare, while solving a crucial need for our clients," says Jean-Michel Lavoie, AVP of Product Development, Group Benefits at Sun Life. "In Group Benefits, we always scan the market for innovative trends, and this is just one more way that we are driving innovation for our clients."

Thanks to the IMPACT study, Canadians will be matched with the right medication, at the right

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dose, based on their genetic make-up. Sun Life, the only insurance carrier involved in this research, will provide eligible claimants with the opportunity to participate. Participation is optional. No claimant is required to participate and there are no consequences if a claimant declines the offer.

What does the testing involve?

Study participants will have their saliva analyzed to identify genetic variants that can influence how they respond to 33 of the most commonly used mental health medications.

A report is then sent to the participant's physician highlighting the results:

- Green - this medication is expected to work best;
- Yellow - dosage levels may need adjusting before use; and
- Red - use with caution.

"Pharmacogenetics is a groundbreaking approach to mental health treatment," said Marilee Mark, Vice-President, Product and Integrated Health Solutions, Group Benefits, Sun Life Financial Canada. "We're pleased to offer our clients access to effective medications to help them manage their condition and return to work sooner. Participating in the IMPACT Study also allows us to deliver innovative solutions to our clients."

For more information on the IMPACT study, [click here](#).

About the pilot project

Participation in the study will be available to claimants with depression and/or anxiety who are in receipt of short or long-term disability benefits.

Claimants will be identified based on a set of pre-defined criteria, and will be offered the opportunity to participate on a voluntary basis.

The pilot project will run until summer 2018. Sun Life will receive aggregate results of the IMPACT study in 2018 to protect the privacy of participants.

Join the conversation

Tag CAMH, Assurex Health and Sun Life and use the hashtags #mentalhealth and #innovation to join the discussion on social media!

Questions?

Please contact your Sun Life Financial group benefits representative.

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