

How Important Is Access To Unlimited Mental Health Benefits Under International Health Insurance?

Since Regency for Expats launched Global Psychology Benefits in December 2016, around 5 per cent of worldwide policy holders in 120 countries have utilised these benefits, and it is growing.

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Mental disorders are extremely common in modern life. It was recently suggested by the Australian Commonwealth Ombudsman that around one in five Australians will experience mental health issues at some stage in their lives. Mental illness can manifest itself in many forms, ranging from anxiety to eating disorders and depression to name but a few, affecting the way people think and how they feel. This has an obvious impact upon their effectiveness in the workplace and society.

So, it stands to reason, if mental disorders are commonplace in everyday life, affecting people who are surrounded by familiar sights, sounds, family and friends, then these issues will be magnified amongst a globally mobile workforce.

Helping HR Achieve Positive Mental Health At Work

By working with various organisations such as MIND (in the UK), HR departments are getting better at identifying and dealing with mental health issues at work. However, it is not enough to simply be aware of these issues and to deal with them when they arise, HR departments must ensure that access to practical assistance is in place before an employee takes up a position within their organisation.

A Holistic Approach To Health

A better understanding of the correlation between employee wellbeing and performance in the workplace has seen more and more HR departments looking towards private medical insurance policies to provide access to counselling, coaching and psychiatric services. These benefits are designed to offer support to employees who are not coping mentally, be it due to anxiety, problems within their family or the pressure of performing in a new role. These types of insurance benefits are particularly valuable to both individuals and employers, particularly when access is unrestricted and they are available anywhere in the world.

The opportunity to work overseas is an exciting prospect but the reality is often extremely stressful. In fact, relocating, starting a new job and moving abroad, are three of the most stressful events for expats. So, imagine the pressure placed upon a new employee running a remote office in an unfamiliar territory.

International corporations often recruit for hard to fill roles from the wider global talent pool, which means that the successful applicant will start a new life in a new country, possibly in a different time zone, with the added expectation that they must instantly deliver results. However, without their usual support network around them, expats can often feel anxious, which means that they will need to find other ways of coping.

This is why the inclusion of unrestricted mental health provision under health insurance is vital. A lack of, limited, or inadequate support, could have a knock-on effect on their physical wellbeing, leading to absence or impaired performance at work. This situation would be costly for all concerned; for the employee and the company, and should a claim be made to cover medical treatment, it would have an

impact on the health insurance provider's bottom line. Alternatively, providing support at the right time can help prevent an unnecessary escalation.

Unrestricted Access

Mental health disorders can be treated effectively if discovered early enough. The majority of health insurance providers understand that they must include this type of cover within their policies, yet the question is, do they go far enough and are there too many restrictions and exclusions?

Some policies include waiting periods, thereby rationing access to benefits until after a specified qualifying period. Another potential problem is that not all policies provide the required amount of cover, for example, many restrict treatment to a specified number of sessions regardless of the severity of the disorder or the on-going

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need for support. There is also the possibility that you may need to upgrade to a higher level of cover to gain access to treatment.

Regency for Expats is the exception to the rule. The company has the necessary infrastructure in place to provide these benefits via a range of wellness programmes, which are already offered to a number of large international companies with globally remote employees.

Increasing Mental Health Claims

The debilitating effect of mental health issues is an extremely hot topic for global corporations. Received wisdom suggests that the way forward is to adopt comprehensive employee wellness programmes.

Our company has seen an increase in the volume of queries dealing with stress, family relationships, learning to communicate with other cultures and even sexual performance. In order to deliver the most useful benefits that reflect clients' needs, be sure to seek a provider who provides unrestricted access to psychologists, counselling and coaching professionals, for whatever reason, as many times as required, anywhere in the world.

With the rising concern about expats' exposure to mental health risks, it is a no-brainer that these services should be included across all international private health insurance plans.

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KAYLA HALL

Similar to Regency's client base, Kayla is citizen of the world; educated overseas before returning to her native Thailand to start her career with Regency for Expats. Kayla's progression through the company includes a number client-facing roles and extensive interaction with brokers, providing an in-depth understanding of the specific issues faced by corporate clients and the globally mobile individuals which they employ. In her capacity as Business Development Manager, she regularly liaises internally with stakeholders to ensure Regency's continued evolution and its position as a market leader. "Regency holds the gold standard for expat insurance policies. We are the only insurer to offer fully unrestricted counselling and mental health benefits on a truly global scale". Visit www.regencyforexpats.com for further information.

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