Revealing unidentified health risks: How a comprehensive venipuncture panel uncovers the body’s hidden secrets

When you make the decision to offer wellness screenings to your employees, you are making the choice to receive deeper insights into your population’s health. Venipuncture testing supports a broad test menu, including hemoglobin A1c (HbA1c), ferritin, and complete blood count (CBC), as well as targeted testing for values like high sensitivity C-reactive protein (hsCRP) and thyroid-stimulating hormone (TSH).

Comprehensive testing enables you to identify more health risks among your employees that may be missed with a fingerstick screening alone. While your organization sees the benefits of comprehensive screening in the form of meaningful data that can help you design benefits plans and incite cost savings, your employees reap the benefits of a comprehensive screening as a lifesaving opportunity.

During the 2016 Blueprint for Wellness program (the Quest Diagnostics employee wellness screening program), a new employee participant, Grace, realized the benefits of venipuncture testing. She had completed four years of fingerstick screenings through previous employers and her lipid and glucose results were primarily normal in years past. However, in the fall of 2016, Grace received a call from PWNHealth, the medical oversight team for Quest Diagnostics Health & Wellness screenings, which ultimately led her to view these screenings in a much different light.

PWNHealth notified Grace that she had 13 out-of-range results, including 1 that was life-threatening. Her hemoglobin, iron, and ferritin levels were extremely low, far below the “abnormally low” threshold, and she was encouraged to seek medical attention as soon as possible.

“Initially I thought it was no big deal, but since PWNHealth reached out to me, I took a step back. These people have been trained to know the red flags. All of my numbers were normal in December 2012, when I delivered my daughter. I was wondering, what has happened since then?” said Grace.

“Well, the basic screenings I had since then didn’t test these measures, and unless there’s a reason to do so, many doctors won’t administer these tests either. You can go years without getting numbers for measures like ferritin. Because of this comprehensive screening, we were able to investigate the root cause of why my numbers were so low.”
Grace’s physicians continued to marvel at how she was functioning with such low values; low hemoglobin and iron results in low oxygen delivery throughout the body and typically yields severe fatigue and shortness of breath, as well as the potential for more serious injury to the heart, brain, and muscles. These symptoms could have easily led to a catastrophic event. One nurse even asked Grace, “How are you walking?”

“Oh, this is why you were always so tired.’ People just think they have kids and a job and they’re tired. These past four years I am thinking I have small children, I am tired all the time, no big deal.”

“The PWNHealth care coordinator was shocked that I hadn’t yet visited the ER due to a total collapse, or even worse, had a catastrophic accident. Had I still been with a company using fingerstick screening, I might still be in the dark to what was really going on inside my body.”

Thanks to her complete screening insights and PWNHealth’s follow-up, Grace contacted her primary care physician, who then encouraged her to see her OBGYN. Her OBGYN said the root cause of her low values could be a variety of things including internal bleeding, inefficient blood cell production, or cancer. After investigating the cause further, they located a mass in her cervix that thankfully was benign. Grace stated that her doctor said her abnormal results would not have been found using “regular tests” the office would have run at a typical wellness visit.

“If I found out 3 or 4 years ago, we could have stopped this ahead of time. I am grateful, though. A lot of folks may be in this boat, and they may not know what’s going on until it’s too late. Our bodies are quite powerful, but they can hide symptoms.”

Grace now takes supplements to replenish her body, and has blood drawn every 2-3 months to monitor whether her body is sustaining hemoglobin and iron levels with the supplements. Grace and her physician team will continue to monitor the issue with the help of her yearly venipuncture wellness screening from Quest Diagnostics.

In Grace’s words, “The only reason I was alerted that I had an issue was because I now worked for an employer who used venipuncture testing with a comprehensive panel.”

For more information about comprehensive testing options, contact us at 1.800.654.7824 or reach out to your Account Manager.