

Paramedical provider launches health screening services across Canada

In March, Canadian paramedical services company **Quality Underwriting Services (QUS)** announced that it has formed a new subsidiary, **Quality Health Services (QHS)** in partnership with **Sunshine Health Services**. This move marks the firm's foray into the nearly deserted field of proactive screening and health assessment clinics in Canada.

"We were seeking added value for group insurance companies," **Ian Keiller**, vice-president and Quebec bureau manager of QUS, told *The Insurance Journal*, explaining the move.

Sunshine Health Services, which will be taking on the Quality Health Services name, was founded in Toronto in 2001.

With close to 4,000 screening and assessment sessions held in five years, mostly in Ontario, the company had already carved out a place in this sector. QHS now plans to expand the concept across Canada.

QHS screening sessions cover over a dozen health concerns, from high cholesterol to osteoporosis, and cardiovascular health to diabetes.

Nurse **Hélène Poireau** is in charge of clinic development in Quebec. She explained the dynamics of these types of one-day health programs. "We can tell people if they are at risk of contracting a given illness or not." These clinics are preventive, she noted. "We cannot diagnose anything. We are in fact the first step of a process leading to a medical consultation."

The clinics are sponsored by insurers, employers or pharmaceutical companies. The screening sessions cost between \$600 and \$900 per day to hold.

Susan Dineno, president of Sunshine Health Services, says that while there is a great deal of information available once a person gets sick, there is a tremendous gap in disease prevention education. QHS aims to fill this gap. "We're teaching people how to take care of themselves," she says.

The main cities targeted this year for expansion are Montreal, Toronto and Hamilton, followed by Calgary, Edmonton and Vancouver. Six companies operating in Canada, **Manulife Financial** (for the second consecutive year), **Federated Life**, Fedex, Levis Strauss, Ed Smith and the Canadian division of Campbell soup manufacturers have signed contracts with QHS.

The QUS subsidiary is intent on making its mark in 2006. "Our objective is to be established across Canada," Mr. Keiller said.

Mr. Keiller pointed out that Canada lags five years behind the United States, where these clinics are widespread. Conditions in this country are ripe for setting the trend in motion, he says. "I think the timing is good. The governments are increasingly open to private companies' operating in this field." (MJB)



Ian Keiller