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**2023 PBGH HEALTH CARE &  
BENEFITS SYMPOSIUM RECAP**



Pittsburgh  
Business Group  
on Health



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**200+** ATTENDEES



**12** SESSIONS



**20+** EXHIBITORS



**2** KEYNOTES

**ONE MISSION: PROTECTING &  
EMPOWERING EMPLOYER HEALTHCARE**  
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Mike Stancil, CEO, PBGH,  
welcomes employers and  
guests to the 2023 Symposium.





# STACEY RICHTER – KEYNOTE SPEAKER RELENTLESS HEALTH VALUE



Helping to open Symposium 2023, Stacey Richter, host of Relentless Health Value, the largest podcast for senior executives at healthcare organizations, explored the dynamics around care gaps – a series of disjointed transactions, leaving patients lost in the maze of the medical system.

Care gaps represent a critical issue – costly both in terms of finances and the mental and physical well-being of those affected. Richter explored the notion that healthcare, at its core, should not merely be a series of transactions between these care gaps. Instead, a seamless, non-fragmented patient journey is vital for better outcomes.

When Primary Care Physicians, for example, have the time to build relationships and coordinate care, the benefits extend to everyone, including specialists. Solving for care gaps means helping patients navigate these “in-between spaces.” It requires investing in employees, understanding that reducing employee health plan claims costs and improving healthcare quality necessitate spending on the upfront to save on the long tail of treatments.





Collaboration becomes the linchpin in this scenario, setting clear expectations and working closely with providers to defragment care journeys, reduce duplicative care, and improve health literacy. Studies highlight enhanced care coordination leading to early treatments results in better outcomes and lower costs, particularly for those with low to moderate incomes. By fostering communication and relationships, collaboration not only improves care and outcomes but also potentially reduces costs, making it a win-win solution for all stakeholders.

In addition to being host of Relentless Health Value, the Ms. Richter also serves as co-president of Aventria Health Group, working with large, self-insured employers, pharmaceutical and medical device organizations, as well as co-president of QC-Health, a benefit corporation dedicated to overcoming care gaps for patients by helping PCPs and specialists work together.



# THE “F” WORD (FIDUCIARY)

**Justin Leader and Mike Gaal**

At the 2023 PBGH Healthcare and Benefits Symposium, attendees heard about the transparency movement in healthcare and the implications for plan sponsors during the breakout session, “The “F” Word (Fiduciary).” Mike Gaal of Milliman and Justin Leader of BenefitsDNA led the discussion.

There is a growing demand for transparency in the healthcare world, especially with the significant rise in prices. Efforts are being made to eliminate the existing barriers in the industry, but with this comes a pushback from companies who stand to lose profits as a result.

The substantial issue with gaining transparency is sorting through the vast amount of patient data that exists. The public went from having zero data to having massive amounts of information. Transparency gives more power to the consumer and less power to the industries. Allowing consumers to have access to this knowledge puts the companies at a disadvantage, taking away some of their power in the market. Consumers will be able to shop around for the best option instead of settling.

## SPEAKERS



**Justin Leader,**

BenefitsDNA

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**Mike Gaal,**

Milliman

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In turn, employers will want to provide the best price as well as the best quality for their employees. They will be incentivized to pay attention to what they offer and how their employees utilize it. In the future, there could be incentives available when patients choose certain providers or facilities, aiming to improve the quality and outcomes.

Transparency in pharmacy is imminent. There are continuous debates in congress around what legislation needs to be in place in the pharmacy industry to provide true transparency. Many people are fighting back for regulations and policies. We can do better, but of course there is opposition along the way. Employers must keep up on what responsibilities they hold to provide their employees with the best quality of healthcare.



# INFORMED CHOICES, IMPROVES HEALTH: STRATEGIES TO SUPPORT EMPLOYEES THROUGH THEIR BENEFITS EXPERIENCE

**Ray Casambre and Carolyn Riva**

Fostering a culture of learning and providing easy access to resources can empower employees to make the most of their benefits, which enhances their overall well-being and job satisfaction.

Our session, “Informed Choices, Improved Health: Strategies to Support Employees Through Their Benefits Experience,” discussed innovative strategies that bridge the gap between employee wellness and the workplace. Attendees heard from Ray Casambre of Pfizer and Carolyn Riva of Quantum Health. They shared how personalized approaches can lead to a healthier, happier, AND a more productive workforce.

When it comes to healthcare benefits, things can get complicated, and there aren't always explanations for everything. There is a vast number of employees who do not understand what benefits they have available to them as part of their healthcare package.

## SPEAKERS



**Ray Casambre,**

Pfizer

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**Carolyn Riva,**

Quantum Health

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**Sponsors and associate members collaborate in the Symposium's exhibit hall.**

Riva shared one example where a patient received a routine colonoscopy, that turned into a prostate cancer diagnosis. Quantum Health stepped in to coordinate with the doctor and patient to ensure that the patient would be sent to an in-network hospital. Without this interference, an out of network location would have been utilized, producing a hefty bill.

Quantum Health works to provide patients with the details of their procedures, as well as the costs that they will be facing. They aim to ensure patients are always well-informed, leaving no one behind in terms of knowledge. Ironically enough, Quantum Health's research has shown that younger generations spend more time researching their benefits but understand it the least.

A good reminder to recognize that navigating the healthcare world is not easy. Keeping patients aware is a crucial step in the healthcare process. Boundaries are sometimes present for patients around non-clinical aspects of healthcare, too.

For example, improving health literacy and more accessible treatments are two areas that should not go unnoticed. The goal is to make sure a patient is confident in navigating the healthcare system and how to proceed following a diagnosis.

Casambre shared that there is a clear need for innovation when it comes to healthcare efficiency. Pfizer's new app, Easable, intends to create a simpler patient experience. When exposed to Covid-19, patients can use the one stop telehealth app to get a diagnosis and treatment.

He continued to remind attendees that Covid-19 is not a diagnosis of the past, it is still very relevant today. Booster shots are no longer referred to as booster, rather they are categorized with a yearly flu shot. Treatment for Covid-19 will enter the same space as the flu, and what have been used as flu only clinics will transition into all respiratory virus clinics where all vaccines will be available.

# LEVERAGING DATA TO EVALUATE DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION IN EMPLOYEE BENEFITS

**Debbie Partsch and Joanna Balogh-Reynolds**

Organizations often rely on traditional data sources when shaping employee benefit choices, but this approach offers only a narrow perspective on the challenges employees encounter. Numerous factors beyond the workplace significantly influence benefit outcomes.

In this presentation with Debbie Partsch of Innovu and Joanna Balogh-Reynolds of Segal, attendees heard how to enhance data collection and analysis by incorporating a DEI-focused mindset. They left with an understanding of what unconventional data entails and identify the elements that provide the greatest benefit for your employees.

Social determinants of health should always be considered. Employers must be aware that each employee is not on the same health journey. Examples of these determinants could include where a person lives and their financial background.

These elements can affect a person's ability to obtain proper health treatment even when they have a health plan through their employer. Family members' needs must be included and not overlooked when selecting benefits.

## SPEAKERS



**Debbie Partsch,**

Innovu

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**Joanna Balogh-Reynolds,** Segal

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Healthcare equity benefits can help all employees achieve their unique health goals. Examining individual data and scenarios is important to get a greater picture of what your employees are facing. You will learn more about each employee's personal narrative and gain valuable insight into their health journey.

Solutions for big health issues do not need to be grand. Audience members were reminded to think outside of the box. One minor change can have a big impact and serve as the solution to equity in numerous situations. Employers should establish connections with employees. These connections increase the chances that the employee will aim to improve their health and modify their habits. As an employer, actively provide them with the necessary information and support.



# 2023, THE PERFECT STORM OF MENTAL HEALTH CHALLENGES

**FAINA LINKOV AND JANETTA BEKMAN**

The last three years have been challenging to say the least, bringing with them new sources for mental health issues. As an employer, remember to think outside of your individual viewpoint. Consider what your employees and their families may be trying to overcome and what resources will give your employees a better chance at overall well-being.

Our session entitled, “2023, The Perfect Storm of Mental Health Challenges,” explored the unprecedented challenges that have converged in the current year, placing a significant strain on employee well-being. Attendees gained insights from Janetta Bekman of AbbVie and Dr. Faina Linkov of Duquesne University. They delved into strategies for supporting and promoting mental health in the workplace, which fosters a healthier and more resilient workforce.

When the Covid-19 pandemic hit the world, schools had to go remote, making students of all ages shift their methods of education. With the switch to remote learning, students were forced into isolated environments during prime

## SPEAKERS



**Faina Linkov,**  
Duquesne University

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**Janetta Bekman,**  
AbbVie

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socializing ages. This in turn has established a massive rise in mental health challenges. Students did not learn at the same rate and missed out on a significant amount of socializing. Testing reveals a three-year learning delay in many students. Learning deficits paired with a delay in socialization has created a new epidemic of mental health issues among the younger generations.

Mental health illness can cause an increase in absenteeism and presenteeism. To ensure they get the needed support, employees should be able to openly report their mental health problems at work. A mental health illness diagnosis can be overwhelming, but getting treatment is vital.

The stigma around mental health is slowly breaking down, but more needs to be done. The fear of seeking help will lessen as employers create a supportive and open-door work environment. While your employees' overall well-being is most important, seeking mental health support sooner rather than later is far less in cost than the impact it can have on employers' bottom line when not solved.

# TRANSPARENCY IN PHARMA

Susann Schlotterback, Greg Baker, Tom Davies, moderated by Kevin O'Brien



Transparency in the pharmacy industry is imperative. Enhanced transparency can empower your employees to make informed decisions and ultimately contribute to better health outcomes. Moderated by Kevin O'Brien of Innovu, our session, "Transparency in Pharma," included industry experts Greg Baker (AffirmedRx), Tom Davies (RxBenefits), and Susann Schlotterback (Merck).

Trust and transparency have become paramount in the healthcare industry. In the realm of pharmaceuticals, it's imperative to trust those overseeing your pharmacy benefits. Establishing hands-on partnerships is essential to maintain transparency throughout the entire manufacturing process. While pricing tools can seemingly offer savings, navigating pharmacy costs becomes complicated due to rebates and net expenses.

Employers play a crucial role by leveraging their data, which holds valuable insights. Pharmaceutical Benefit Managers (PBMs) are often influenced by financial motives, leading to potential conflicts of interest. Employers must verify their partnerships with PBMs, ensuring credibility and ethical practices. The responsibility falls on employers to conduct thorough research, utilizing their position to select partners wisely.

Prioritizing preventive care remains the top priority, as neglecting health can escalate costs significantly. Employers, rather than physicians, must delve into drug pricing options, exploring alternatives that bypass the substantial markups associated with larger corporations. By engaging in research and fostering transparent relationships, employers can effectively navigate pharmacy benefits, which support their bottom line and employees' well-being.



## SPEAKER



**Susann Schlotterback,**

Merck

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## SPEAKER



**Greg Baker,**

AffirmedRx

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## SPEAKER



**Tom Davies,**

RxBenefits

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## MODERATER



**Kevin O'Brien,**

Innovu

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# BENEFITS TO BENEFIT YOUR BOTTOM LINE

**Niki Campbell and Vince Maromonte**

In the modern workplace landscape, where Gen Z and Millennials led the “quit movement” on the heels of the Covid-19 pandemic, the concept of work-life balance rapidly evolved into a dynamic work-life intersection. Niki Campbell, founder & CEO, The Flourish Group, and Vince Maromonte, senior vice president, employee benefits practice leader, HUB International, highlighted the notion this intersection is crucial, not just for personal well-being but for businesses’ bottom lines.

Employees seek purpose and a caring employer, emphasizing the need for meaningful work. With a diverse, multi-generational workforce, scheduling work and relaxation time during office hours is paramount. The shift toward prioritizing leave-time, introducing “Service Days” for volunteering, and “Care Days” for medical appointments fosters a supportive environment.

Employers embracing this approach see a positive return on investment in their workforce, especially since the cost of replacing employees is three times the initial outlay. Well-used benefits offer employers a strategy, which not only benefits employees, but also strengthens the company.

## SPEAKERS



**Niki Campbell,**  
The Flourish Group  
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**Vince Maromonte,**  
HUB International  
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# SUFFERING IN SILENCE: HOW TO SEE BEYOND STIGMA AND GUIDE EMPLOYEES TO BETTER HEALTH

**Markita J. Billups and Tammy Fennessy**

Employees miss an average of four workdays monthly because of obesity and digestive health-related conditions. Diagnosing these problems proves challenging because of varied, non-specific symptoms, leading many employees to suffer in silence. Identifying affected populations through claims data is more complex.

Session leaders, Markita J. Billups, head of clinical operations, Oshi Health, and Tammy Fennessy director of benefits, American Eagle Outfitters, Inc., pointed to the notion that a critical solution is needed to create a comfortable environment for employees to discuss problems openly, receive accurate diagnoses and appropriate treatments. Riding alongside is behavioral health, which if deployed properly can be transformative.

Some 92 percent of people have controlled symptoms within four months, saving more than \$10K per member with behavioral intervention – enhancing employee well-being and boosting workplace productivity.

## SPEAKERS



**Markita J. Billups,**

Oshi Health

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**Tammy Fennessy,**

American Eagle  
Outfitters

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# THE EVOLUTION OF CELL AND GENE THERAPY: OPPORTUNITIES AND BARRIERS

**Victoria Alegria, Matt Fickie and Nicole H. Tapay**

Victoria Alegria, APRN, MSN-FNP, medical director, Car-T, The Janssen Pharmaceutical Companies of Johnson & Johnson, Matt Fickie, MD, senior medical director, Highmark, Inc., and Nicole H. Tapay, J.D., director, cancer care delivery & health policy, Association of Community Cancer Centers discussed the promise of Cell and Gene Therapy explaining harnessing T-Cell and Gene Therapy to combat cancer brings hope, especially in cases, such as multiple myeloma, where conventional therapies falter.

T-Cell therapy, offering life-changing remission, illuminates paths toward recovery, impacting patients and families. Simultaneously, Gene Therapy may halt cancer progress and even eradicate its presence in select cases. However, these groundbreaking treatments come at significant cost, ranging from hundreds of thousands to millions annually, straining employer insurance plans, particularly Stop Loss coverage.

Optimizing these therapies' potential demands a shift in approach. Early consideration of T-Cell and Gene Therapy could not only enhance patient outcomes

but also curtail overall costs. Currently, these therapies are primarily available in major metropolitan centers, limiting accessibility for certain populations. While challenges persist, the relentless pursuit of innovation promises a future offering hope to patients and their families.







## SPEAKERS



**Victoria Alegria,**  
Johnson and Johnson  
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**Matt Fickie,**  
Highmark  
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**Nicole H. Tapay,**  
ACCC  
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# WHAT'S GOOD FOR YOUR HEART IS GOOD FOR YOUR BRAIN

## Stephanie Campbell and Clayton Jacobs

Stephanie Campbell, principal solutions consultant, Hello Heart, Dr. Renee Richardson, senior manager, Giant Eagle Pharmacy, Clayton Jacobs, executive director, Alzheimer's Association Greater Pennsylvania Chapter, emphasized the vital link between cardiovascular health and brain well-being. With the global financial burden associated with cardiovascular health, they highlighted the intricate connection to brain health with research increasingly demonstrating what benefits your heart impacts your brain – potentially reducing the risk of heart issues by some 80 percent.

Remarkably, Alzheimer's cases may be able to be prevented or delayed. Simple measures, such as dedicating 30 minutes daily to walking or light exercise, significantly enhance heart health, cognitive function and overall well-being. Their message: Nurture your heart, body and mind through regular activity. It's never too late to safeguard brain health and embrace a healthier lifestyle.

## SPEAKERS



**Stephanie Campbell,**

Hello Heart

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**Clayton Jacobs,**

Alzheimer's Association

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# LOCAL PHARMACY CARE BRINGS POSITIVE OUTCOMES

**Amelia Damlo, Regional Vice President, Sales, Elixir**

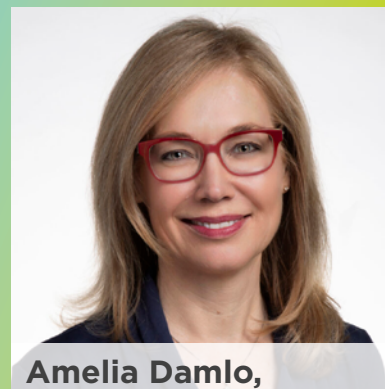
Amelia Damlo, Regional Vice President, Sales, Elixir, highlighted the dual nature of changes in healthcare, which can either benefit or harm. Constructive disruption management becomes pivotal in navigating this landscape. A significant portion – 24 percent – of employee healthcare expenses is attributed to pharmaceutical costs.

Employers were advised to engage with pharmacy vendors actively, discussing market trends and optimizing employee benefits usage. Specialty medications, despite not always being specialized, contribute significantly to rising healthcare expenditures. Amelia stressed the importance of open communication between patients, families, doctors, and pharmacists outside restrictive Pharmacy Benefit Manager networks to avoid care gaps.

Elixir's specialist pharmacists possess mental health certifications, underlining the urgency of addressing mental health. Early medication termination, particularly in mental health drugs, poses risks like pharmaceutical waste and heightened concerns.

Amelia's talk underscored the critical role employers play in curbing healthcare expenses and enhancing employee well-being, addressing pressing issues like the rampant spread of diabetes and the intricate dynamics of healthcare complexities.

## SPEAKERS



**Amelia Damlo,**

Elixir

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# MENTAL HEALTH: TWO DEGREES OF SEPARATION

**Howard Gerver, James Kinville, Alin Severance and Michael Radeschi**

Howard Gerver, founder of The Adam Project, turned personal tragedy into a mission for mental health reform after his son's untimely death at 32. (Four lives were saved through his son's organ donation, inspiring Gerver's impactful initiative.)

James Kinville, senior director, Life Solutions, emphasized the crucial need for proper mental health care. He, alongside Dr. Alin Severance, MD, medical director, Behavioral Health Services at UPMC Health Plan, offered medical insights and stressed the importance of bridging the gap between mental health lip service and effective solutions, suggesting apps and therapy for patients with heightened depression risks.



Gerver said The Adam Project offers free mental health resources and connects individuals with suitable providers, promoting easy access to vital support. Despite the rise of mental health apps, the clinical backing remains limited. Joining the discussion, Kinville highlighted the significance of employer-led mental health initiatives, citing successful cases where consistent leadership led to visible improvements.



Michael Radeschi, director, strategic partnerships, Innovu, rounded out the input by helping to emphasize the need for businesses to understand the crucial impact mental health has on their workforce. In light of recent challenges, virtual support options, including Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs), have become essential, urging businesses to foster mental health cultures underpinned by strong leadership.



## SPEAKERS



**Howard Gerver,**  
The Adam Project  
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**James Kinville,**  
Life Solutions  
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## SPEAKERS



**Alin Severance,**  
UPMC Health Plan  
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**Michael Radeschi,**  
Innovu  
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# THE OBESITY BOOM: HOW DID WE GET HERE AND WHERE ARE WE GOING?

**Craig Schmidt, Pharm.D, Medical Accounts Associate Director, Novo Nordisk**



Craig Schmidt, Pharm.D, medical accounts associate director, Novo Nordisk, helped kickoff the morning sessions by shedding light on obesity as a chronic brain condition, challenging conventional beliefs tying it solely to diet and exercise.

Recent research reveals shifts in metabolism and hormones during weight changes, making long-term weight control a complex challenge. Predictions indicate by 2030, nearly half of the U.S. population will grapple with obesity, a global health concern exacerbated by societal stigma and bias hindering help-seeking behaviors.

Schmidt underscored obesity's wide-reaching impacts, from physical ailments like depression, diabetes, and cancer to business-related costs such as absenteeism and healthcare expenses. Even a modest 5% weight loss can significantly enhance health. Addressing obesity comprehensively demands integrated wellness, pharmacy, and medical benefits. Employers must ensure coverage for these facets. Overcoming barriers, like specialized training for clinicians and insufficient compensation, requires a multidisciplinary approach. Schmidt advocated for empathetic, patient-centered language, fostering understanding and compassion in the fight against obesity.

## SPEAKERS



**Craig Schmidt,**

Novo Nordisk

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# STEVE GILLILAND: CLOSING KEYNOTE

Steve Gilliland, PBGH



At the 2023 Healthcare and Benefits Symposium, attendees were deeply moved by an inspirational talk delivered by Steve Gilliland. He emphasized the profound impact of our daily choices, reminding everyone that each day presents an opportunity to make a difference. Instead of resigning to the phrase “it is what it is,” Gilliland urged the audience to embrace the belief that life is what you make it. He stressed that true leadership is not determined by tenure but by influence, emphasizing the power of purpose.

According to Gilliland, understanding the ‘why’ behind our actions—our purpose—is essential. Passion and pride, he noted, are the driving forces that fuel our efforts, reminding everyone that even the smallest moments or actions can change the trajectory of someone’s life. He encouraged attendees to identify what truly matters and to never take it for granted, stressing that obstacles are merely strings that may break but should never deter one from their path to success.

Gilliland’s talk was a perfect way to end the Symposium which had the theme of INSPIRE. He left a lasting impression on the audience, reminding them that their actions, regardless of how seemingly insignificant, have the potential to create a ripple effect of positive change.

His words encouraged everyone present to approach each day with genuine intention and a commitment to never underestimate the impact they can have on others, as well as to keep the determination going despite the challenges they may face.

## SPEAKERS



**Steve Gilliland,**

PBGH

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