



November 2023 | Jewish Healthcare Foundation news, events, milestones, & more

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Youth From Across Pennsylvania Gather at the Capitol to Advocate for Student Mental Health Days Legislation as Part of the PA Youth Advocacy Network

Over 100 students from 10 counties traveled to Harrisburg on November 15 to participate in a Student Mental Health Advocacy Day at the Pennsylvania Capitol. JHF's PA Youth Advocacy Network worked with legislative champions, more than 15 youth-serving organizations and school districts, and teens themselves to plan the advocacy day.

Students participated in a press conference and met with over 25 legislators to advocate for recently introduced legislation that would provide Pennsylvania students with excused mental health days as part of a teen-led initiative of the PA Youth Advocacy Network. The day also included opportunities for students to share their concerns about mental health with legislators, observe House and Senate sessions, tour the Capitol, and hear from speakers about various mental health initiatives.



Senator John Kane leads a press conference announcing SB 886, which would provide students with excused mental health days.

State Senators John I. Kane and Judy Schwank introduced [Senate Bill 886](#), which would ensure K-12 students can take a mental health day without a doctor's note or diagnosis, allowing students to connect with resources and support instead of truancy court. Representative Napoleon Nelson introduced a companion bill in the PA House, [HB 1519](#). If passed, the legislation will enable Pennsylvania to join 12 other states, providing students excused absences from classes to focus on their mental well-being.

"Empowering our students to take mental health days sends the message that taking care of your mental health is as important as your physical health and reduces the stigma around seeking help," Senator Kane said. "We must prioritize the mental well-being of our students and provide them with the necessary tools to succeed both academically and personally. We've talked to students from around the Commonwealth, and they are letting us know loud and clear that this is exactly what they need."

JHF Teen Mental Health team members Deborah Murdoch, Sarah Pesi, Jessica Segal, Carol Frazer, and Katie Weidenboerner supported a state-wide committee of students from the PA Youth Advocacy Network over the past year as they met with legislators about the need for the bill, provided feedback on the draft bill, and prepared and designed the statewide advocacy day. The committee includes Mia Bell, Saanvi Vereddigari, Grant Cibulsky, Niharika Shukla, Hallie Dong, Minji Kim, Vanesa Aguay, Ishani Bansal, Emily Kwon, Tyler Nolt, Mohammad Shedeed, Karla Aguay, Samantha Dasika, and Alekhya Buragadda.

Youth advocates participating in the advocacy day represented the Beaver County Youth Ambassador Program, Boys & Girls Club of Western Pennsylvania, Neighborhood Academy,

Pittsburgh CAPA Stand Together, Central Dauphin High School Multicultural club, Crossroads, Cumberland Valley High School, The Friendship Circle, GirlGov, Greater Valley High School, Highlands High School/The Teen Spot, Linden Hall, Pittsburgh Public Schools Student Voices, Propel Braddock Hills High School Stand Together, Sewickley Academy, SLB Radio Productions, Inc., South Fayette SHOUT (Social Handprints Overcoming Unjust Treatment), Sto Rox High Junior/Senior High School, Upper Merion High School, VOiCEup Berks, Washington Health System Teen Outreach, WeReign, Woodland Hills School District, and Wyomissing Area Junior-Senior High School.

Student advocacy efforts and this bill come at a crucial time as 1 in 6 U.S. youth aged 6-17 experience a mental health disorder each year and with 50 percent of all lifetime mental illness beginning by age 14. Suicide is the second leading cause of death among people aged 10-14. Legislators in support of the bill have touted it as a no-cost way to begin addressing stigma, jumpstart conversations, and build a culture of care within schools. Student Tyler Nolt designed a leave-behind to make a case for excused mental health days that can be viewed [here](#).

The students were recognized on the floor of the House and rallied during a press conference held in The Rotunda to advocate for the bill. Vanesa Aguay (Grade 12- Berks County), Niharika Shukla (10th grade- Cumberland County), Aubrie Moon (Grade 12- Allegheny County), Demeitris Taylor (12th Grade- Beaver County), and Colana Tymes (Grade 9- Philadelphia) shared their experiences and voiced the need for excused mental health days. Alex Gariepy, a social worker and school-based therapist, also spoke.

As part of her remarks, youth advocate Niharika Shukla shared: “This legislation recognizes that our emotional well-being is as essential as our academic performance.” Alex Gariepy, a school social worker from Sto-Rox School District, powerfully shared that “Our students deserve compassion. They deserve to feel safe, and they deserve this bill.”

“It is past time that mental health support in schools is normalized,” Nelson said. “This legislation will allow for school administrators and educators to help students who need to take absences and give parents peace of mind that their children won’t be penalized for taking steps to deal with their stress and emotional health,” said Nelson. “While we must take the time to grapple with billion-dollar education funding debates, it should not prevent us from addressing this simple, free, effective solution to our students’ mental health needs.”



Student Vanesa Aguay, left, discusses her mental health advocacy efforts with Senator Judy Schwank, middle, and members of her staff.

The PA Youth Advocacy Network empowers and connects youth advocates across Pennsylvania to build a safety net for teen mental health by providing skills-building and advocacy opportunities for teens and youth-serving organizations interested in mental health.

JHF Issues Emergency Grants to University-Based Hillels and Chabads

In response to reports of increased antisemitism on university and college campuses throughout the U.S. and growing anxiety among Jewish students, the Jewish Healthcare Foundation (JHF) has approved \$135,000 in emergency grants to Hillel International, the Pitt/CMU campus Hillel, and two local Chabads serving these campuses. JHF is committed to supporting the mental health needs of teens and young adults, and the negative mental health implications of these antisemitic attacks and rhetoric are far reaching.



Hillels and Chabads on university campuses offer Jewish students a refuge and a wide range of support resources. Since the start of the Hamas-Israel War, Hillels and Chabads have seen a dramatic spike in engagement among their Jewish students, who seek camaraderie, solace, and a safe space in the face of agitation among fellow students who condemn Israel and even Jews in the aftermath of the horrific attacks by Hamas on October 7, 2023.

JHF approved a \$100,000 grant to the Foundation for Jewish Campus Life, also known as Hillel International, one of the largest Jewish campus organizations in the world. Working with thousands of college students globally, Hillel staff have expanded their outreach to students and faculty available 24 hours-per-day, 7 days-per week for peer and professional support.

JHF approved a \$25,000 grant to the Hillel Jewish University Center in Pittsburgh, set between the University of Pittsburgh and Carnegie Mellon University, but providing support throughout the area.

Two grants for \$5,000 each were given to Chabad of Carnegie Mellon University and to Chabad House on Campus at the University of Pittsburgh.

November Boasts Record-Setting Number of Patient Safety Innovations and Awards

The Patient Safety Technology Challenge announced the winners of the 12 sponsored events that took place since the last week of October, the greatest number of awards for patient safety technology innovation ever in a four-week period.

Hack-a-Startup is Carnegie Mellon University Swartz Center of Entrepreneurship's two-week immersive experience

encouraging
accelerated

by three general

a fourth special prize was sponsored by the Patient Safety Technology Challenge to award the

JHF Policy Director Carolyn Byrnes, MPH, CPH presents the awards at Hack-A-Startup at Carnegie Mellon University.



students to create a start-up on an timeframe. Teams were incentivized prizes for the best start-up ideas, and

best tech-enabled patient safety solution. The event kicked-off on October 28th with a workshop on patient safety. Several other workshops were offered from October 30 to November 10 to foster the beginning stages of CMU students' startups. The winner was SafeRx who had recently also taken home the grand prize from hackAuton on CMU's campus. They focused on creating a mechanism for physicians to assess adverse drug reactions, before they occurred using natural language processing, computer vision, and AI models.

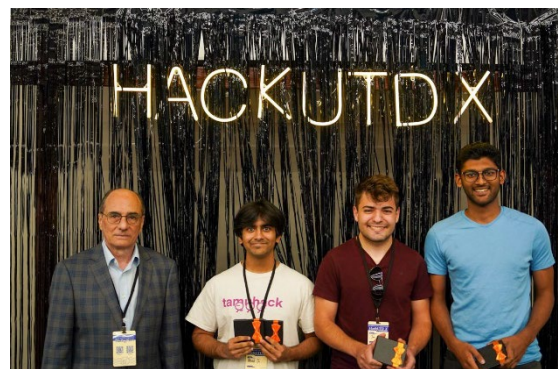
SymptoSecure received the \$400 prize as the winner of the "Best Patient Safety Hack" at this year's HackNC, a hackathon held on October 27-29 at the University of North Carolina Chapel Hill. Their prototype, SymptoSecure Plus, is a medical profiling tool intended to close the gap between patients and healthcare providers, with a specific emphasis on tackling healthcare disparities experienced by marginalized communities. The digital pre-consultation platform will assist patients in arranging and conveying their medical history, symptoms, and relevant information in a well-structured format.

The 10th Annual VandyHacks 24-hour hackathon was held at Vanderbilt University in Nashville, Tennessee on October 28-29. AEyes, a computer vision cross-platform mobile app for the visually impaired won the \$500 prize for the best patient safety technology solution. The team was motivated by their friends who are visually impaired. They aimed to create a more accessible way for the visually impaired to get feedback about their surroundings since smart glasses can be expensive. Their app acts as the eyes of a person and takes an image of their surroundings to better understand the environment around them and tells the user, using AI-based text-to-speech, what is around them that could be hazardous. For example, the prototype shared with the judges showed when there was water on the ground – a slip hazard – or when they were approaching a staircase. The judges felt that this technology could be particularly useful in healthcare settings.

This year's HackSC-X was held at the University of Southern California on November 4-5 with the patient safety vertical receiving the most submissions. A total of 19 were judged to receive Amazon Gift cards worth \$1,400 for the team to share. MedVisi-on was awarded with the best patient safety technology at HackSC-X. MedVisi-on acts as a supplementary cognitive resource and additional set of eyes for perioperative nurses, allowing them to better monitor equipment to alleviate their mental workload and enabling them to concentrate on the surgical procedure. Simultaneously, it was designed to diminish the avoidable risk of Retained Surgical Bodies, like scalpels and sponges.

The Patient Safety Technology Challenge track winning team received \$400. The overarching theme of the hackathon was nautical-themed; therefore, hackers were encouraged to weave that theme into their projects. Man Overboard, the winning team, focused on a safety system crafted to identify passengers going "overboard," promptly alerting ship crews in real-time. Employing computer vision and instantaneous communication, their system consistently surveils the ship's surroundings, promptly notifying the crew upon detecting a potential overboard situation. The two patient safety judges, Linda Curley of Rutgers School of Nursing and Joan Gleason Scott of the New Jersey Hospital Association, thought this could easily be applied in healthcare settings. For example, it could be adjusted to track patients in nursing homes – a population that can easily go missing, or in pediatric hospital units to track children moving about the ward.

MakeUC is a hackathon weekend hosted annually at the University of Cincinnati's 1819 Innovation Hub. This year, a \$500 prize was given to ManagMed for the best tech-enabled patient safety solution. The team created ManagMed, a consumer-facing mobile app focused on medication safety for patients to use after they visit their doctor. The app would help patients: look up their insurance coverage for new medications and provide suggestions for generic alternatives, set up reminders to take medications based on information gathered from scanning medication labels, alert them about drug interactions, and embed a chatbot to answer generic health questions after leaving the doctor's office.



Ernest Kestone (left), patient workshop facilitator and judge, pictured with the winning patient safety team, Curis. (Photo courtesy of HackUTD)

HackUTD was held at the University of Texas at Dallas on November 4-5. Team members from Curis took home \$1,000 as the winner of the Patient Safety Technology Track. Curis is a project focused on keeping oncologists updated on the optimal course of action for their patients. The AI-powered tool can also identify pertinent medical trials tailored to the individual patient's needs based on matching algorithms they created. The team's solution has the promise of enhanced diagnosis – reducing the risk of wrong or delayed diagnosis – which can be the difference between life and death for cancer patients.

OSU Bio-Hack hosted by Ohio State's Biomedical Engineering Society held its 5th annual event November 4-5. The theme of this year's hackathon was patient safety, so all 60 hackers were tasked to come up with a tech-enabled solution. The winning team took home \$500 for their solution which helps emergency medical services (EMS) teams respond to the scene of an accident to score concussions. With the capability to be used offline, the solution is especially useful for rural settings. The team member who conceived this idea was an athletic trainer who frequently saw concussions in remote areas where patients needed to be assessed quickly. The device could also send a printout to the local emergency department to facilitate communication of the findings in the field. The athletic trainer and his team built a very simple device, running on a raspberry pi, with their custom software that made this a reality. The judge, Kevin Jones, from OSU, who works in Enterprise Architecture and Health Systems Informatics, thought it was a simple but very effective tool.

HackRPI was held at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute on November 4-5. RPillPal: A Biometric Pill Dispenser was the winning patient safety team who took home the \$1,000 prize. RPillPal was conceived as a potential solution to avoid opioid overdoses after patients are discharged from the hospital and ensure only the patient has access to that medication in order to protect other family members from having access to potentially harmful medications. Their prototype for the biometric pill dispenser is intended for home use and uses fingerprints for patient identification, providing accurate doses per doctor recommendations. It also allows for direct connectivity with healthcare providers to facilitate progress monitoring and timely treatment adjustments. The judge, Kathy Rauch, a nurse by background working for the Hospital Association of New York State, was impressed by the progress made by RPillPal during the 24-hour hackathon.

ASU's Social Innovation Start-up Lab – a course for graduate students from Arizona State University – wrapped up on November 16th with the seven student teams pitching to a panel of judges. The partnership between the Patient Safety Technology Challenge and this pitch competition was unique. Funding was not provided by the Pittsburgh Regional Health Initiative, instead the course professors invited Ariana Longley, project manager of the PSTC, to pitch patient safety as a topic for the students in their course to tackle. One team, NurseWav, formed and received support from Longley throughout the fall semester – focused primarily on directing them to subject matter experts that could help them with understanding the problem, and with customer discovery. Their solution focused on coming up with a tech-enabled solution to address alarm fatigue for nurses in non-acute post-surgery units in hospitals. In the end, NurseWav and one other team, FinEdu, split the grand prize of \$5,000 equally. NurseWav will use the \$2,500 they won from the pitch competition to continue working on their project. Read more [here](#).

A semester-long project at ASU's Edson College of Nursing and Health Innovation culminated at the Health Innovation Exhibition November 17. Through an inaugural partnership with the Patient Safety Technology Challenge, students focused their innovative efforts on a singular issue of care related to patient safety. The idea "Telegaming Doc," won a \$1,000 grand prize for their idea which seeks to address the miscommunication between patient and provider that can lead to poor care through a game-like, online self-evaluation tool. Four other top teams received \$500 each. Read more [here](#).

The University of Rochester School of Medicine and Dentistry Student Entrepreneur group (SMD Entrepreneurs) organized a 4-week innovation challenge sponsored by the Patient Safety Technology Challenge this fall. The event launched October 19th and culminated in a final pitch competition on November 16th. Between the launch date and the finale students met one-on-one virtually with patient safety experts to be mentored. A total of 8 teams pitched in the competition. Three teams came away from the event with cash prizes. The team that won the 1st prize of \$2,000 was VAPGuard, 2nd place for \$1,000 was M2, and third place team that received \$500 was MedForward. VAPGuard helps reduce harmful bacteria in the mouths of intubated patients using blue light. M2 designed an AI-directed training simulator for placement of drains into hydrocephalus patients and traumatic brain injuries which are often misplaced. MedForward redesigned surgical pedals with haptic feedback to reduce the risk of surgeons pressing the wrong pedal, saving time and money while reducing potential complications.

The success of the Patient Safety Technology Challenge has been made possible by the leadership and commitment of Ariana Longley. Longley joined JHF in 2022 as a consultant to guide the planning and execution of the Patient Safety Technology Challenge. Prior to joining JHF, Longley spent seven years at the Patient Safety Movement Foundation, where she served as COO and vice president and helped build their broad international network of patient safety experts and advocates.

JHF Sponsors 2nd AI for Patient Safety Conference in Utah

The Jewish Healthcare Foundation was a lead sponsor of the “Augmented Ingenuity: AI for Patient Safety” conference held November 6-8 at the Marriott Hotel University Park in Salt Lake City, Utah, a convening of leaders in artificial intelligence and patient safety to discuss real solutions to the current crisis in patient safety.

The conference gathered prominent leaders in AI and patient safety from across the U.S.



discuss real solutions to the current

Jewish Healthcare Foundation (JHF) President and CEO Karen Wolk Feinstein, PhD was a presenter at the conference.

During her presentation, she provided an update on the [National Patient Safety Board Advocacy Coalition](#)'s ongoing efforts to establish a National Patient Safety Board (NPSB), including the President's Council of Advisors on Science and Technology [report on patient safety](#) released September 8. The report recommends establishing a multidisciplinary National Patient Safety Team within the Department of Health and Human Services and the appointment of a patient safety coordinator reporting to the president.



Dr. Karen Feinstein gives a presentation on the current state of patient safety.

Many presenters at the Conference have been engaged in various JHF and Pittsburgh Regional Health Initiative programs, including **members of the [National Patient Safety Board Advocacy Coalition](#)**: Martin Hatlie, JD, founding member of Patients for Patient Safety US and director at the Medstar Institute for Quality and Safety; Drew Ladner, MA, MBA, CEO of Pascal Metrics; David Mayer, MD, vice president of safety and quality at MedStar Health; Raj Ratwani, PhD, MPH, vice president of scientific affairs at MedStar Health; Sue Sheridan, founding member of Patients for Patient Safety US; **members of the [Patient Safety Technology Challenge](#) advisory board**: Jason Adelman, MD, MS, chief patient safety officer and associate

chief quality officer, vice chair for quality and patient safety, and executive director of patient safety research, Columbia University Irving Medical Center; David Bates, MD, Brigham & Women's Hospital; Kedar Mate, president and CEO of Institute for Healthcare Improvement; **collaborators on the [Pittsburgh Regional Autonomous Patient Safety](#) initiative**: Richard Boyce, PhD, professor at University of Pittsburgh; Joe Kiani, founder, chairman and CEO of Masimo; Aman Mahajan, MD, PhD, MBA, senior vice president of Health Innovation at UPMC Enterprises, University of Pittsburgh; **guests on the [Up Next for Patient Safety](#) podcast**: David Classen, MD, MS, professor at University of Utah and conference organizer; Thomas Gallagher, MD, professor and associate chair for Patient Care Quality, Safety, and Value at the University of Washington;

and Hardeep Singh, MD, MPH, professor at Baylor College of Medicine and director of the Houston Diagnosis Improvement Safety Center.

In addition to JHF, the conference was sponsored by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, University of Utah Health, and Informatics, Decision-Enhancement, and Analytic Sciences (*IDEAS*) VA Health Services Research and Development Center of Innovation.

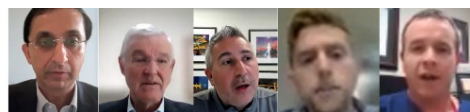
RAPS Salon Highlights Patient Safety Research Support and Projects Underway at the University of Pittsburgh

The November 16 RAPS Salon highlighted some of the patient safety research at the University of Pittsburgh and how it is working with UPMC to become a laboratory for research, discovery, and commercialization of patient safety innovation.

The Salon featured presentations by [Aman Mahajan](#), MD, PhD, MBA, Senior VP of Health Innovation, UPMC Enterprises, and Peter and Eva Safar Professor and Chair, Department of Anesthesiology & Perioperative Medicine, University of Pittsburgh; [Alexander Sundermann](#), DrPH, Assistant Professor of Medicine, University of Pittsburgh; [Ron Poropatich](#), MD, MS, Director of the Center for Military Medicine Research, University of Pittsburgh; [Matthew Neal](#), MD, Vice Chair of Surgery, Academic Affairs; Director of Emergency General Surgery, and Roberta G. Simmons Associate Professor of Surgery, University of Pittsburgh Medical Center; and [Evan Facher](#), PhD, MBA, Vice Chancellor for Innovation and Entrepreneurship, University of Pittsburgh, and Associate Dean for Commercial Translation, University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine.

Dr. Mahajan, the founder and chief technology officer for three startups in the med-tech field, presented on “Predicting and Modifying Risk to Improve Outcomes,” which highlighted how development and validation of a machine learning model to identify patients before surgery at high risk for postoperative adverse events. Tools like the surgical risk calculator are important because identifying the risk allows the healthcare team to automatically trigger pathways and protocols to improve patient outcomes both in the short-term and up to two years out from when they received care.

Dr. Poropatich presented “Field Testing of the Trauma Care in a Rucksack (TRACIR) Closed Loop Diagnosis and Resuscitation System for the Medical Management of Circulatory Shock,” cross-disciplinary, cross-institutional research that creates a system to resuscitate, stabilize, and evacuate a patient in the field using AI. Funded by the Department of Defense and the National Institute of Health, TRACIR has been found to provide successful outcomes for people in areas where there are limited resources, disaster, mass casualty, and large-scale combat operations. TRACIR is currently being used in Ukraine, which is driving the pace of its development in the U.S. military and in the civilian sector.



Pictured from left to right are RAPS speakers: Aman Mahajan, Ron Poropatich, Evan Facher, Alexander Sundermann, and Matthew Neal.

Dr. Sunderman shared his research “Whole-Genome Sequencing Surveillance and Machine Learning of the Electronic Health Record for Enhanced Healthcare Outbreak Detection,” which is working to change the paradigm of how hospitals and healthcare systems detect and intervene detection and investigation of healthcare associated outbreaks of infectious disease in hospital settings using genomic epidemiology. By coupling the recent development of affordable genomic sequencing with computer algorithms connected to the vast trove of data in electronic health records, [University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine](#) and [Carnegie Mellon University](#) scientists greatly improved the quick detection of infectious disease outbreaks within a hospital setting over traditional methods for tracking outbreaks.

With a prerecorded video, Dr. Neal shared his presentation “UPMC Emergency General Surgery Verification Program,” outlining the poor outcomes in emergency general surgery, where 11 percent of admissions are surgical admissions, however they account for 50 percent of surgical mortality in the United States. In response to this, UPMC has taken on leadership in a nationwide emergency general surgery verification program that has a triaged approach to care, including standards addressing both timeliness and team availability; recognition of the value of clinically relevant emergency general surgery data to drive quality improvement including the development of a new [Targeted Registry Module](#); and a multi-disciplinary approach to care and quality, with involvement of the full array of care team members.

Dr. Facher oversees Pitt’s [Office of Innovation & Entrepreneurship](#) which inspires, educates, and enables others to make an impact on society, improve the regional economy, and transform their own careers. The office is composed of four units: The [Innovation Institute](#), the [Office of Industry and Economic Partnerships](#), the [Big Idea Center](#) for student innovation, and the [Institute for Entrepreneurial Excellence](#).

On the average year, it creates between 13 and 20 new startup companies based on university technologies and performs about 150 transactions with third parties, giving them access to university intellectual property. Pitt has also established [LifeX](#), a life science incubator, that works with early-stage companies on education, acceleration, and direct investment to help foster and grow an ecosystem in and around southwestern Pennsylvania to grow health science-based and life-science based companies to bring about an economic and societal benefit locally. With a \$16-17 million venture fund, it also directly invests in local startups.

Watch the Salon [here](#).

Salk Health Activist Fellows Strategize for Timely Mental Health Reforms

During an unprecedented public health crisis facing the mental health system, the time is now for overdue mental health reforms. With a President and Governor committed to improving the mental health system, this year's Salk Health Activist Fellowship focused on how to leverage resources and attention to make effective policy contributions for the populations most at risk of system gaps. The Fellowship focused on equipping healthcare activists with effective skills and frameworks to advance policy issues to address needs within the mental health system.



Twenty-eight fellows representing 18 different specialties and 13 universities participated in the Salk Fellowship.

Over nine-weeks from September 19 through November 14, an interdisciplinary cohort of 28 fellows representing 18 different specialties and 13 universities collaborated within eight teams to strategize on action plans to advance policy change.

"I have loved my experience as a Salk Health Activist Fellow," Corey Flynn, MPPM, doctoral student in the University of Pittsburgh's School of Education, Health, and Physical Activity program. "The absolute best part was meeting my group. We had a wonderful time working on our topic of youth voice advocacy. Having the tools to know how to advocate for positive change is invaluable to my academics and career."

The fellows built advocacy action plans focused on existing or theoretical legislation in Pennsylvania that addresses: supporting healthcare worker mental health, creating an age-friendly system, elevating youth voice to improve mental health systems, transforming school-based mental health services, establishing universal mental health screenings in primary care, improving 988 education in K-12 schools, providing financial support to build up the behavioral health workforce, and advancing syringe service program legalization and decriminalization.

"The Salk Fellowship provided the policymaking framework for my advocacy impact in mental health. It allowed me to apply frontline patient care insights and to hone policy advocacy skills with guidance from policy experts and support of a like-minded cohort of mental health activists," said Karen Kwok, MSN, FNP, MPH, digital health nurse practitioner at Brilliant Corporation. "I came away from the fellowship experience more familiar with the policymaking process and ready to make mental health policy with strategic success. I highly recommend the Salk Health Activist Fellowship for early and midcareer professionals eager to make a difference in priority policy areas with the tutelage of policy experts and a supportive learning community."

The program would not have been possible without the support of partners and experts including: State Representative Aerion Abney; Coley Alston, MPH, program director at Hugh Lane Wellness Foundation; Julius Boatwright, MSW, LSW, RYT, founder and managing director at Steel Smiling; Gretchen Chapman, PhD, professor in Social & Decision Sciences at Carnegie Mellon University; Donna Cooper, MPA, MIM, executive director at Children First; Lynn Cooper, behavioral health policy specialist at Pennsylvania Association of Area Agencies on Aging; Connor Dalgaard,



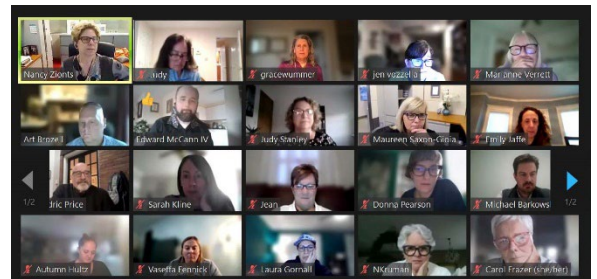
Karen Feinstein addresses the fellows during the in-person finale.

student at Vassar College; State Representative and Chair of the House Health Committee Dan Frankel; Kathi Elliot, DNP, MSW, CRNP, chief executive officer at Gwen's Girls; Jourdan Hicks, MS.Ed, community correspondent at PublicSource; Matthew Hurford, MD, president and CEO at Community Care Behavioral Health; Rich Lord, managing editor of Public Source; Elizabeth Miller, MD, PhD, FSAHM, medical director of Community and Population Health at UPMC Children's Hospital; State Representative and Majority Whip Dan Miller; State Representative Napoleon Nelson; and State Representative Arvind Venkat, MD.

The program this year also benefited from mentorship from previous Salk Alumni that came back to share their journey and knowledge with this year's fellows, including: Hillary Holes DeFrancesco, CHES (2018 alum); Amber Edmunds (2022 alum); Selena Eisenberg (2018 alum); Marita Garrett, MA (2012 alum); Callum Harding (2021 alum); Alyce Palko (2021 alum); and Mike Stancil, MPS (2022 alum).

Death and Dying Series Equips Professionals with Strategies for Improving Conversation Skills

The Jewish Healthcare Foundation (JHF) completed its second [Death and Dying Series for Healthcare Professionals](#) on November 13. This program, inspired by the popular Death and Dying Fellowship for graduate students, was designed to enhance the serious illness communication skills of healthcare professionals who are already in practice. Through six virtual sessions, 22 professionals from a range of healthcare disciplines learned techniques for having more effective conversations around end-of-life topics with patients and families.



Nancy Zionts addresses the second cohort of the Death and Dying Series for Healthcare Professionals.

Led by JHF Chief Operating Officer and Chief Program Officer Nancy Zionts, MBA, JHF Medical Advisor Judy Black, MD, MHA, Senior Communications and Program Specialist Lisa George, MPH, CHES, and Nurse Project Manager Maureen Saxon-Gioia, MS HSA, RN, sessions were structured around having advance care planning conversations, strategies for effective conversations around POLST and CPR, respecting the individual throughout the serious illness experience, end-of-life decision making, and challenges at the end of life.

The series culminated with an opportunity for participants to practice serious illness conversations in small breakout groups. Participants engaged in case-based role-play involving POLST conversations and ethics scenarios. The virtual format provided a supportive environment in which to explore the challenge associated with having these types of conversations within their

professional practice. Breakout sessions were facilitated by experts in the field, including Michael Barkowski, DO, MA, physician, Division of Supportive Care/Palliative Care, Allegheny General Hospital and Wexford Hospital, Allegheny Health Network; Justin Engleka, GNP-BC, ACHPN, senior program manager, Palliative Care, Highmark Health; Vaseffa Fennick, LCSW, behavioral health clinical manager, Highmark ECCM, and Emily Jaffe, MD, MBA, VP and executive medical director, Enterprise Palliative Care Strategy and Implementation, Highmark Health. Judith Black, MD, MHA, JHF medical advisor, and Fredric Price, MD, retired OB/GYN, cancer surgeon, and board-certified palliative care specialist, also contributed to the discussions. Facilitators provided feedback regarding elements of the conversations that were effective and offered suggestions for how to improve and enhance their conversation skillset.

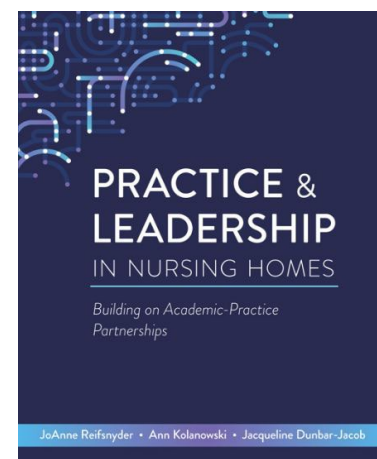
After completion of the case-based role play, participants and facilitators reconvened to discuss the challenges and opportunities that end-of-life conversations provide and the tools that make these conversations easier and more effective. Participants reflected on how this series will impact their work moving forward and the value of programs like this to support professionals in doing this important work.

As one participant noted, "I'm grateful to see that there is a big support network and system that is being proactive and involved with patients who are facing death. It's uncomfortable, but a necessary part of death and dying."

Applications are now being accepted for the 2024 JHF Death and Dying Fellowship for graduate students, which begins in January. For more information and to apply, [visit here](#). The application deadline is December 14.

JHF Staff and Partners Contribute to New Textbook on Academic-Practice Collaboration in Nursing Homes

The staffing crisis that continues to plague nursing homes is only exacerbated by the shrinking pipeline of nursing school graduates into the long-term care setting. Students continue to have limited exposure to geriatrics coursework, and misconceptions around the viability of long-term care nursing as a career persist, leaving many new nurses looking elsewhere to start their careers. Yet long-term care nursing offers rich opportunities for leadership and professional fulfillment. To address this perception and education gap, the Curriculum Committee of the Revisiting the Teaching Nursing Home initiative, which Jewish Healthcare Foundation (JHF) and Health Careers Futures lead together with The John A. Hartford Foundation, conceived of a resource to transform the perception of the role of nursing in long-term care settings, better prepare the careforce, and improve the quality of care for residents.



[Practice & Leadership in Nursing Homes: Building on Academic–Practice Partnerships](#), a new textbook published by Sigma has been designed as a guide for both undergraduate and graduate nursing students to illuminate the opportunities within long-term care and provide a roadmap preparing the next generation of nursing leaders to deliver high-quality care to nursing home residents. It delves into topics such as comprehensive care planning, models of care delivery, common geriatric syndromes, staff development and training, and nursing home financing and regulatory information, offering students a glimpse into the multitude of ways that they can influence the delivery of person-centered care to residents. The content also aligns with the updated *AACN Essentials: Core Competencies for Professional Nursing Education*.

Edited by Teaching Nursing Home collaborators and Curriculum Committee co-chairs JoAnne Reifsnyder, PhD, MSN, MBA, RN, FAAN, Ann Kolanowski, PhD, RN, FAAN, along with Jacqueline Dunbar-Jacob, PhD, RN, FAAN, the book also features chapters authored by JHF staff members Nancy Zions, MBA, Emily Franke, MSW, LSW, and Maureen Saxon-Gioia, MSHSA, BSN, RN, and Terry Fulmer, PhD, RN, FAAN, and Amy Berman, RN, LHD(hon), FAAN, of The John A. Hartford Foundation. Additionally, the following initiative partners also contributed their expertise to the book: Marie Boltz, PhD, GNP-BC, FGSA, FAAN, of the Ross & Carol Nese College of Nursing at The Pennsylvania State University; Sophie A. Campbell, MSN, RN, CRRN, RAC-CT, CNDLTC, of PADONA (Pennsylvania Association of Directors of Nursing Administration); Howard B. Degenholtz, PhD, FGSA, of the University of Pittsburgh; Donna Fick, PhD, GCNS-BC, FAAN, of the Ross & Carol Nese College of Nursing at The Pennsylvania State University; Taylor McMahon, RN, CNDLTC, of The Willows Presbyterian Senior Care Network; Kim Ratliff, BSN, RN, CNDLTC, of Wesley Enhanced Living; and Brian D. Stever, BSN, RN, RAC-CT, owner of Stever Advisors, LLC.

This text is essential reading for nursing students and faculty, as well as those already working in the nursing home setting. JHF and The John A. Hartford Foundation are collaborating on a widespread dissemination plan for the textbook, which will include integration into Teaching Nursing Home Collaborative activities. Additionally, to further promote dissemination of the content of the textbook, authors will serve as subject matter experts during the 2024 Pennsylvania Long-Term Care Learning Network administered by JHF.

Karen Feinstein Named Co-Chair on Innamorato's Health & Human Services Transition Committee

Allegheny County Executive-elect Sara Innamorato [announced](#) on November 29 that Jewish Healthcare Foundation President and CEO Karen Wolk Feinstein has been named to her transition team as a Co-Chair of the Healthy Families & High-Quality Human Services Committee. County Executive-elect Innamorato's Policy Committees will inform [All in Allegheny](#), the most inclusive community engagement initiative in the County's history that will invite residents from across the County to inform the Innamorato Administration's governing agenda.



The Allegheny County Health Department and the Allegheny County Department of Human Services are two critical arms of the County government and provide essential services for more than 1.2 million county residents.

The full list of All In Allegheny committee members is available [here](#).

JHF Releases *Pittsburgh: A Safer Childbirth City* Program Review

The Jewish Healthcare Foundation and Women's Health Activist Movement global (WHAMglobal) are grateful for the many collaborators that have worked on making Pittsburgh a safer place to give birth over the past three years during the *Pittsburgh: A Safer Childbirth City* project. These efforts existed locally long before this project began, and they'll continue into the future, but we celebrate the profound progress and critical collaboration that has been fostered during this project. Read the program review [here](#).



PA Health Collaborative Defines 2024 Priorities and Strategies

The Pennsylvania Health Funders Collaborative (PHFC)—a network of over 20 health foundations across PA that works at the intersection of health philanthropy and policy—held its 17th Annual Conference in mid-November. PHFC is co-chaired by Jewish Healthcare Foundation Chief Policy Officer Robert Ferguson, MPH, Ann Marie Healy, the Executive Director of the Philadelphia Health Partnership, and Carol Thornton, MPA, the Director of Grants and Public Policy at Partnership for Better Health. Ann Torregrossa is the executive director of the Collaborative.

The conference began with PHFC members sharing their recommendations for the group's 2024 priorities, including expanding access to behavioral health, improving maternal health, supporting school nurses, advocating for youth mental health, and elevating housing as a social determinant of health. Nancy Zionts, MBA, the



PHFC members gather at the organization's 17th Annual Conference.

Foundation's Chief Program Officer and Chief Operations Officer also highlighted why Collaborative members should prioritize aging within their 2024 funding and policy efforts.

Dr. Matt Wintersteen, PhD, associate professor and research director of the Child & Adolescent Psychiatry Services at Thomas Jefferson University, then presented on Pennsylvania's 988 suicide and crisis lifeline. Across the State, lifeline staff deescalate most crisis situations over the phone, however, he emphasized the need to strengthen the 988 program's data processes, reach and engagement with underserved communities, and long-term sustainability. A panel then convened multiple stakeholders to discuss healthcare workforce issues and advocacy, including Nicole Stallings, the CEO of the Hospital and Healthsystem Association of Pennsylvania (HAP), Matt Yarnell, the President of SEIU, Lauren Tavolaro-Ryley, Professor of Nursing at Philadelphia Community College, and Nikki Weigand, NAMI Keystone Director of Advocacy and Policy. Dr. Val Arkoosh, Secretary of the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services (DHS), and Dr. Debra Bogen, Acting Secretary of the Pennsylvania Department of Health, joined the health funders to discuss dental health, Medicaid waivers, the mental health infrastructure, and public health in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The conference resulted in a new policy agenda for PHFC in 2024, and Robert Ferguson, Ann Marie Healy, and Ann Kennedy, Executive Director of the Touchtone Foundation, were confirmed as PHFC's co-chairs in 2024.

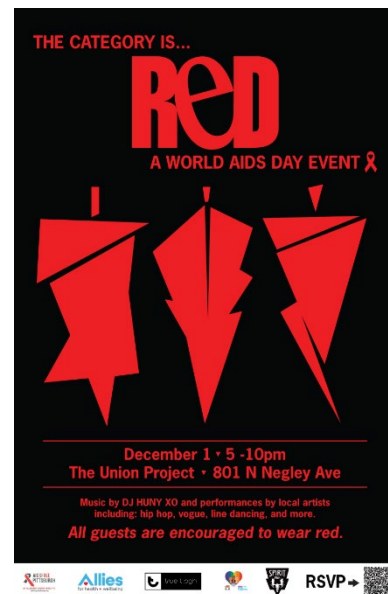
AIDS Free Pittsburgh to Raise Awareness, Build Community on World AIDS Day

You are invited to attend [AIDS Free Pittsburgh](#)'s next event "The Category is...RED – A World AIDS Day Event" to be held at the Union Project, 801 N. Negley Ave., Pittsburgh from 5-10 p.m. Friday, December 1.

World AIDS Day, designated on December 1, is an international day dedicated to raising awareness of the HIV/AIDS epidemic. This year, AFP has partnered with True T Pgh, the Q-Munity Center, and Allies for Health and Wellbeing to bring the community together to commemorate those we've lost and to celebrate the advancements in prevention and care that can end the HIV/AIDS epidemic.

The color and the red ribbon have become a universal symbol of awareness and support for people living with HIV. Thus, guests are encouraged to wear red attire to the event to demonstrate solidarity in the fight against HIV/AIDS. This space is for and will feature remarks by people impacted by HIV, collaborative partners, and community members. There will be entertainment by and performances from local artists.

Snacks will be available, and a cash bar will be provided by Spirit Pgh. The event is free and open to the public, though RSVP is required by filling out this [form](#).



JHF Death and Dying Fellowship Accepting Applications for 2024 Cohort

Now in its 10th year, the Jewish Healthcare Foundation Death and Dying Fellowship, one of the Feinstein Fellowships, continues to address a key challenge: the reality that professionals are ill-prepared to communicate about death, dying, and grief with patients and families. Through a combination of virtual and in-person sessions/site visits in the Pittsburgh area, the Death and Dying Fellowship allows participants to learn, confront, and discuss the legal, medical, social, cultural, familial, and spiritual aspects of death and dying within a multidisciplinary group in a low-pressure environment. Current and recent graduate students in healthcare-related disciplines in the western Pennsylvania region are encouraged to apply. The Fellowship runs January – March 2024, and the application deadline is December 14. For more information and to apply [visit here](#).



JHF Board Member Ellen Kessler Receives Squirrel Hill Treasure Award

Ellen Kessler received a Squirrel Hill Treasure recognition at the annual celebration for the Squirrel Hill Urban Coalition on November 8. The award honors those who have made a great impact on Squirrel Hill and the city at large.

Kessler has served on the Board of Trustees for the Jewish Healthcare Foundation for eight years and has been a valuable contributor. She is the current chair of JHF's distribution committee and has been an active member of JHF's Senior Residential Living Full Court Press Team, a group that worked to address the crisis within long-term care. She also currently serves as the secretary for the Board of Trustees.



Kessler has dedicated her adult life to being an active community volunteer and leader. She is also a life Trustee of the Carnegie Museums of Pittsburgh and a member of the Carnegie Museum Art Advisory Board, where she recently services six years as Board Chair. She has served on the boards of several organizations, including the Winchester Thurston School, The Children's Institute, Steeltown Entertainment, the Jewish Federation of Pittsburgh, and the Jewish Community Center of Greater Pittsburgh.

Read more about Kessler and other award winners [here](#).

JHF Staff and Board Members Attend Violins of Hope Exhibit

Before the close of the show, the Jewish Healthcare Foundation Aging Team visited the *Violins of Hope Pittsburgh* exhibit, an effort to bring healing to the region through the power of music and the human spirit. The exhibit was open from October 7 through November 21 at the Posner Center at Carnegie Mellon University.

The centerpiece of *Violins of Hope* is a collection of more than 85 restored violins, violas, and cellos played by Jewish musicians during the Nazi regime. The community project also included programming educational and cultural exhibits and performances over the two-month period.

The efforts to bring *Violins of Hope* to Pittsburgh began in 2018 under the leadership of project chair Sandy Rosen and co-chairs Linda Simon and Pat Siger, who is a JHF board member, Chair of Health Careers Futures, and former Chair of JHF.

JHF approved a two-year, [\\$50,000 grant](#) in 2021 to help bring *Violins of Hope* to Pittsburgh. The commitment was part of the \$1 million total budget.



Pictured from left to right: Debra Caplan, Maureen Saxon-Gioia, Karen Feinstein, Stacie Bonenberger, Emily Franke, Nancy Zionts, Lisa George, Anneliese Perry, Chelsea Dickson, and Pat Siger.

Now Hiring: Program Specialist

The Jewish Healthcare Foundation (JHF) seeks a team player with strong interpersonal skills, the ability to work collaboratively with interdisciplinary teams, and experience in quality improvement to join our team in support of the Pennsylvania Perinatal Quality Collaborative, Patient-Centered Medical Home Learning Network, and Opioid Use Disorder Center of Excellence (COE) Learning Network. [Click here](#) to view the full job description and apply.



Feinstein Fellowship Alumni Spotlight: Amy Kowinsky

Death & Dying Fellowship Alumna Amy Kowinsky is the executive director of Dementia360, a Presbyterian SeniorCare Network program designed to support and educate families caring for people living with dementia at home.

Amy has over 20 years of professional experience in many different areas of health care. She has worked in gerontology,



dementia care, healthcare quality improvement, and nutrition. She has led the redesign of work processes to improve satisfaction, safety, and efficiency in hospitals, long-term care, and interdisciplinary groups, and now at home.

Amy was drawn to dementia care when she and her mother became caregivers for her grandmother, who was living with dementia. She realized there was very little support in our healthcare system for people living with dementia, or for the family caregivers, who were on the front lines of providing care. She changed her career, devoting herself to improving the quality of care, and the quality of life, for people living with dementia *and* their family caregivers.

Hear more about her fellowship experience [here](#).

Dr. Jonas Johnson Centers Patient Outcomes and Patient Safety in Care

Jonas Johnson's, MD, FACS entire career as a head and neck surgeon has been dedicated to creating the best patient outcomes, with astute focus on patient safety.

Growing up in Jamestown, NY, near the lake, he was very interested in biology from a young age. While he considered being a veterinarian, he focused his sights on medical school, attending Dartmouth College and going on to receive his medical degree from SUNY Upstate Medical Center in Syracuse, NY. As a freshman, his mentor piqued his interest in becoming a head and neck surgeon.



He received his medical degree from SUNY and completed two years of surgical residency at the Medical College of Virginia in Richmond before returning to SUNY Syracuse to complete his residency training in otolaryngology.

Dr. Johnson served in the United States Air Force just after the Vietnam War. In 1979, he and his wife Janis moved with their three sons to Pittsburgh, where he worked at the University of Pittsburgh with Dr. Eugene Myers, an oncologist and otolaryngologist who was a leader in the treatment of head and neck cancer.

After 42 years at the University of Pittsburgh, Dr. Johnson announced in the fall of 2021 that he was stepping down as the chairman of the Department of Otolaryngology, where he also served as a professor of otolaryngology and radiation oncology at the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine Department of Otolaryngology and a professor of oral and maxillofacial surgery at the University of Pittsburgh School of Dental Medicine. However retirement is not in his future, rather, he has shifted his focus to the [UPMC Head & Neck Cancer Survivorship Clinic](#).

Created by himself and Marci Lee Nilsen, a nurse who is an assistant professor in Pitt's School of Nursing, the Clinic takes a multidisciplinary approach to addressing the individual needs of survivors of head and neck cancer, including swallowing therapy, dental health, audiology, and physical therapy.

In all his roles former and current, Dr. Johnson has committed to the care of patients with head and neck tumors in an environment of education and research.

In 2015, he was appointed the surgical representative to the UPMC Surgical Services Oversight Committee, which was charged with improving efficiency and its safety record. Dr. Johnson explained in reviewing the data, the issue was that frail patients were not being identified before surgery despite the data showing that 13 percent of the 50,000 people having surgery per year were determined to be frail and of them 70 percent accounted for ICU admissions and almost 50 percent of costs and 30 percent of deaths.

Working with a collaborative committee, the hospital instituted a frailty risk analysis index. Dr. Johnson worked with the leadership of UPMC and paid surgeons to complete the analysis on their patients, requiring frail patients to be referred to the Center for Presurgical Care..

“Over the course of six or seven years, we were able to change the way surgeons saw frailty and to help them understand how avoidance of surgery, sometimes, is in the patient's best interest. Now, it's not that you say to the patient ‘we can't do anything for you,’ but instead we consider alternative interventions,” said Dr. Johnson. He added that the systems change was not an easy one to adopt but would become an integral part of the system of patient evaluation as it continued to show positive results.

Reflecting on this change, Dr. Johnson said there are many areas ripe for change in the American healthcare system, but the opposition comes in part from the hubris of some doctors to admit that some problems cannot be fixed by surgery driven by a patient's desperation and willingness to try interventions despite small or nonexistence probabilities of positive results.

“There's this temptation to do things that won't work partly because the patient and family wants you to do it. In doing that you enter an alliance of folly. You must be responsible and not allow emotion to cause patients, families, and doctors to make irresponsible decisions whose outcomes are pretty much predictable,” Dr. Johnson said.

Dedicating his entire life to treating patients with head and neck cancers, Dr. Johnson has been a vocal advocate of the *Human papillomavirus (HPV)* vaccination. He distinctly remembers the cancer patients he treated shifting from smokers to a large group of people who have never smoked.

He recalls going to the Allegheny Board of Health to testify for the HPV vaccine to be required for seventh grade, along with 16 other vaccinations needed to go to a public school, and the intense pushback from the public who were against vaccinations.

“In 2003, we realized that HPV is causing throat cancer and fast forward to today – it's the most prevalent cancer we see. HPV-related cancers are way up,” Dr. Johnson said. “Vaccine hesitancy is a huge problem, but the reality is that HPV vaccination is picking up. With the alliance between the Jewish Healthcare Foundation, pediatricians, and lots of other entities there's been a pretty good uptake of the vaccine in our community.”

Dr. Johnson has been a long-time friend of the Jewish Healthcare Foundation, lauding it and Dr. Karen Wolk Feinstein for their inspirational energy, ambition, and vision for health care. “JHF is inspiring because they’re ambitious for change,” Johnson said. “It’s what we need in our world today.”

Dr. Johnson embraces the promise and opportunity of adopting artificial intelligence into healthcare practices, especially when working in concert with humans who can assist AI in processing the nuance of individual patients, their symptoms, and their specific needs in the operating room.

“The reality is that computers will replace a lot of what we do because the computer can access more information than my brain will have access to, so it makes sense that computers can help us a lot,” Dr. Johnson said.

During his career, Dr. Johnson has been named a top doctor in America by Castle Connolly Medical Ltd. He has received many awards for his teaching and medical accomplishments and is a past president of both the American Academy of Otolaryngology–Head and Neck Surgery the American Head and Neck Society, and the Triologic Society.

His legacy also includes receiving the rank of Distinguished Service Professor at the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine.

Reflecting on his career thus far, Dr. Johnson said, “I feel grateful to all the patients who have entrusted their care to me. They’ve helped me learn about health and health care,” Dr. Johnson said. “And at the same time, I am so impressed by the velocity of change in the world of biomedical science. There is new information every single day of my life. If I had learned nothing since graduating from my residency, I would be completely obsolete today.”