

THE QUARTERLY advantage

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UPMC Health Plan's Producer Newsletter

IN THIS ISSUE

Important Information	2
Resources and services to promote women's heart health	
From Our Leadership	3
Executive Spotlight	3
Rachelle Graham, Vice President, Marketing and Innovation, UPMC Insurance Services Division	
Facility Spotlight	4
Enhancements to services across the state	
In the News	5
Managing costs for your company	
Network Updates	6
UPMC works to improve the health of communities across Pennsylvania	
Legislative and Regulatory	7
Consolidated Appropriations Act Section 204 (RxDC) requirement	
Value-Added Benefits	8-10
Prescription for Wellness: A free member resource for getting and staying healthy	
The Active&Fit Direct Program can help UPMC Health Plan members get healthy	
Sales Strategies and Tips	11
Explore spending account options	
Innovation	12
UPMC Enterprises leads the charge to transform care	
Clinical	13
UPMC Hillman's advanced innovation hub expands personalized cancer treatment	
Awards and Recognition	14-15
Top-ranked care: Our network of doctors and hospitals	
UPMC receives prestigious Catalyst Award Distinction	



Heart disease in women and how to fight it

Solutions to help women prevent and overcome heart conditions

There is a common misconception that heart disease only afflicts men. The truth is that more than 44 percent of women in the U.S. are living with some form of heart disease, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).¹ The CDC also says that the condition is the leading cause of death among women in the U.S. and can affect them at any age, making it a potential concern for employers.²

Research published in the *Journal of the American Heart Association (JAHA)* indicates that heart disease and strokes are leading causes of death and disability in the U.S. The research further notes a lack of ideal cardiovascular health in the nation's workforce.³

Women have different risks, lifestyle factors, and biology than men, so it is critical for employers to provide access to prevention and treatment programs that are tailored to women's needs. The Magee-Womens Heart Program—part of the UPMC Heart and Vascular Institute—provides diagnostics, assessments, and treatment of heart disease in women.

Comprehensive care

The Magee-Womens Heart Program provides care tailored to women, but it is dedicated to helping all patients overcome heart problems. Both women and men can be referred to the program to receive these and other services:

- Comprehensive diagnostic cardiology testing to help detect heart-related illnesses
- Cardiac diagnostics to help to fight heart disease
- Patient education and the ability for patients to discuss their concerns with a nurse manager, nuclear medicine technologist, registered nurse, echocardiographer, and medical assistants
- Risk assessments that evaluate patients' lifestyle, medical history, and family history
- Diagnostic services, such as:
 - o Cardiac catheterization
 - o Cardiac ultrasound
 - o Cardiac stress testing, including ultrasound, nuclear, and magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) modalities
 - o Cardiac MRI
 - o Coronary computed tomography scanning
 - o Echocardiography
 - o Electrocardiograms
 - o Electron beam computed tomography scanning/coronary artery calcium (CAC) scoring
 - o Holter and event monitors
 - o Pre-surgery cardiac clearance
- Heart condition treatment options, such as:
 - o Lifestyle changes
 - o Medical management
 - o Catheter-based procedures like angioplasty, stenting, and valve replacement
 - o Open and minimally invasive heart surgery

Convenient treatment and referral

The program offers convenient cardiac care with both onsite cardiologists and cardiac testing services. A team of physicians is available five days a week to meet with patients and interpret test results. If testing shows that invasive treatment is necessary, patients are referred to other UPMC Heart and Vascular Institute locations for treatment.

Added support

UPMC Health Plan offers Prescription for Wellness, which includes both lifestyle and condition management programs. You can learn more about this offering in the Value-Added Benefits section.

Heart disease differences in women⁴

Specific signs, symptoms, and risks

Heart disease tends to be under- or misdiagnosed in women. That's why it's important for women to know the signs and symptoms. Catching the disease early can help slow its progress.

Women's heart disease symptoms are often different and less obvious than men's. Information from the CDC notes that, although some women have no symptoms, others may have the following whether they are resting or active:

- Angina—usually felt as a dull or heavy chest discomfort or ache
- Pain in the neck, jaw, or throat
- Pain in the upper abdomen or back
- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Tiredness that won't go away or feels excessive

Here are some heart disease risk factors for women:

- High blood pressure (hypertension):
 - o Black women are nearly 60 percent more likely to have high blood pressure than white women
- High level of low-density lipoprotein (LDL) cholesterol
- Tobacco use
- Diabetes
- Excess weight
- An unhealthy diet
- Physical inactivity
- Drinking too much alcohol
- Stress and depression

¹Women and heart disease. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Reviewed Feb. 21, 2023. Accessed March 22, 2023. cdc.gov/heartdisease/women.htm

²Ibid

³Calitz C, Pratt C, Pronk NP, et al. Cardiovascular health research in the workplace: a workshop report. *J Am Heart Assoc.* 2021 Sep 7;10(17):e019016. doi: 10.1161/JAHA.120.019016. Epub 2021 Aug 28. PMID: 34459251; PMCID: PMC8649235.

⁴Women and heart disease. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Reviewed Feb. 21, 2023. Accessed March 22, 2023. cdc.gov/heartdisease/women.htm

Maximizing resources along the path to success



The information you need to succeed can quickly change. Staying up to date on areas that affect our industry is key. Building your knowledge base will support you as you work to find new clients and maintain the valuable relationships you already have with decision makers.

Here at UPMC Health Plan, we are committed to keeping you apprised of the policy and industry changes that may affect our products and your business. We are your dedicated partner, and we look forward to the important work we will do together.

Kimberly Ooth
President, UPMC Commercial Products

As your partner in success, I encourage you to stay ahead of the curve in the following areas:

What we're watching: Increasing the availability of high-quality care

Why it matters: Companies with operations across Pennsylvania need to give employees access to care that can help them stay healthy and productive.

Which articles can tell you more: Facility Spotlight, UPMC works to improve the health of communities across Pennsylvania

What we're watching: Cost management and saving strategies

Why it matters: Employers and employees need to be informed of how to maximize their dollars.

Which articles can tell you more: Managing costs for your company, Explore spending account options

What we're watching: Consolidated Appropriations Act Section 204 data collection

Why it matters: UPMC Health Plan will submit required information to appropriate government entities on behalf of certain group health plans that complete and return the Consolidated Appropriations Act Section 204 (RxDC) Data Collection Form. (Groups that do not complete the form must submit their own data to the applicable federal agencies.)

Which article can tell you more: Consolidated Appropriations Act Section 204 (RxDC) data collection form requirement

Executive Spotlight



The benefits at UPMC Health Plan are available because of the innovative efforts of our thought leaders. Their knowledge, skills, education, and experience are behind the ideas that turn into our products, plans, and services. Each quarter, we will feature a person from our leadership team.

Rachelle Graham, Vice President, Marketing and Innovation, UPMC Insurance Services Division

Rachelle Graham is the Vice President of Marketing and Innovation for the UPMC Insurance Services Division. Ms. Graham leads the enterprise strategy behind branding, marketing, and communications across the Insurance Services Division, including for Workpartners® and Community Care Behavioral Health Organization. She is also responsible for provider communications, network marketing relationships, member engagement and education, print and fulfillment operations, community

engagement and sponsorships, retail marketing, digital member experience, multicultural marketing, and translation services.

Ms. Graham has worked in the marketing and operations industry for 25 years. Before joining the UPMC Insurance Services Division, she held senior marketing and operations roles for several Fortune 100 organizations, including other health insurance companies.

Ms. Graham earned a bachelor's degree in marketing from the University of South Florida. She is also a graduate of Leadership Pittsburgh Inc. (XXXIV), the foremost multidisciplinary leadership identification, enrichment, and networking organization in southwestern Pennsylvania.



Enhancements to services across the state

Endocrinology now available at UPMC Cole in Coudersport and Port Allegany

A service that was previously accessible only via telehealth is now available in person through UPMC in Northcentral Pa. Led by [Ashima Mittal, MD](#), the endocrinology team will use diagnostic tests—such as thyroid ultrasound and biopsy, nuclear medicine scans, bone density tests, and an extensive array of laboratory tests—to evaluate, monitor, and manage hormone disorders for patients in Coudersport and Port Allegany.

[Learn more about endocrinology services.](#)

3D mammography now offered at UPMC Cole in Coudersport

UPMC in Coudersport recently expanded its imaging services to offer 3D mammography (tomosynthesis) as a life-saving diagnostic screening.

“3D mammography is a significant advancement in detecting the smallest tumors in women, especially those with dense breast tissue,” said Susan Branton, MD, medical director of Breast Health Services at UPMC in Northcentral Pa. “Women with dense breast tissue are considered high risk, and it’s important that they have access to the best diagnostic tools available to ensure any concerns are caught and treated as early as possible.”

[Learn about 3D mammography at UPMC in Northcentral Pa.](#)

New Afib treatment options available in Williamsport

The UPMC Heart and Vascular Institute in northcentral Pennsylvania gives patients the opportunity to have advanced treatments for atrial fibrillation in Williamsport. By using innovative approaches—including performing Convergent™ procedures—electrophysiologists and cardiothoracic surgeons are able to provide additional care options for patients with heart rhythm disorders.

[Learn more about the UPMC Heart and Vascular Institute.](#)

UPMC Outpatient Center in Bradford now open

On Oct. 20, the UPMC Outpatient Center in Bradford opened its doors for community members to tour the new facility. The outpatient center is the result of a collaborative effort involving UPMC Cole, UPMC Kane, and UPMC Hamot. It provides access to both primary and specialty care services:

- Bariatric care
- Cardiology
- Ear, nose, and throat care
- Gastroenterology
- General surgery consults
- Medical nutrition therapy
- Orthopedics
- Pain management
- Podiatry
- Primary care
- Women’s health services

[Learn more about the UPMC Outpatient Center in Bradford.](#)



Managing costs for your company

At UPMC Health Plan, we don't limit the definition of affordability to what employers pay for health insurance. Affordability includes the value employers get for the money they spend. It means knowing that the benefits companies provide help their employees live their lives in the healthiest way possible.



75% of health care costs
are driven by lifestyle-related chronic illnesses.

MyHealth is 100% focused on helping members make healthy lifestyle choices.

We work hard to deliver affordable benefits and services to our employer groups. These benefits and services are designed to offer value and help businesses of every size manage their health care costs.

We work closely with employers to understand the impact that unscheduled sick days, leaves of absence, and workers' compensation claims have on their business. We then use the [health and productivity solutions](#) of our MyHealth program to engage employees in their health, ultimately helping each business make a positive impact on their overall costs.

Workpartners—in alliance with UPMC Health Plan—helps its clients apply integrated data analytics to optimize their human capital costs. By leveraging and integrating data that organizations already collect at a person-specific level, Workpartners can understand the challenges of employees and connect them to proven clinical programs.

A true employee-level view of a company's human capital extends beyond medical and pharmacy claims and incorporates the impact of time away from work. Our measures include long- and short-term disability, workers' compensation, FMLA, sick leave, and paid time off, as well as benefit design, benefits administration data, compensation structure, employee demographics, and policies. All are key health and productivity performance indicators.

Evaluating this integrated data gives employers a holistic view of their workers' health and productivity and establishes a broader set of opportunities to improve the company's bottom line.



UPMC works to improve the health of communities across Pennsylvania

Health system puts emphasis on state's central region

UPMC is committed to caring for communities across Pennsylvania. In 2021, UPMC in Central Pa. dedicated \$63 million to community benefits. The funding supported thousands of free local health programs, screenings, and education, including the UPMC Street Medicine team that connect homeless people in the community with medical services and rehousing programs.

Ensuring a steady flow of qualified workers

UPMC in Central Pa. has partnered with local colleges and universities to create a pipeline for new nurses and other employees, including surgical technicians, phlebotomists, and environmental and food services workers.

The inaugural class of the UPMC Shadyside School of Nursing at UPMC Harrisburg started in August with 133 students.

"As we look at the last five years and our success in expanding access to care throughout central Pennsylvania, it's truly amazing all we have achieved," said Lou Baverso, president of UPMC in Central Pa. "Even in these most-challenging times, our continued focus on our patients has allowed us to provide more access, more innovation, and more care than ever. We are stronger because of our employees' commitment and desire for excellence. We will continue advancing our mission of bringing life-changing medicine to the region."

UPMC in Central Pa.: Five years in and still growing

Five years after UPMC extended into central Pennsylvania, UPMC in Central Pa. continues to grow to meet the needs of its communities.

UPMC has invested more than \$900 million to provide high-quality care and services in central Pennsylvania. UPMC in Central Pa.'s annual economic impact to the region is \$2.6 billion.

In addition to seven full-service hospitals, UPMC in Central Pa. operates more than 200 outpatient facilities. The region's more than 13,000 clinical and nonclinical staff account for about one-seventh of UPMC's systemwide total of more than 95,000 employees.

Persevering through a pandemic

Amid the unprecedented challenges of a pandemic, UPMC in Central Pa. had the resources—and the logistical expertise—to mobilize staff to support its communities. It established five on-campus vaccination sites and several community pop-up clinics, initiated a program to reach homebound patients, and offered more than 2,000 vaccine events.

Expanding access to specialty care

UPMC in Central Pa. is creating models of care to enhance access and convenience for patients and families—and to provide more care in lower-cost outpatient settings. Hospital campuses often serve as hubs for primary and outpatient care, and nationally recognized service lines were rolled out in all regions.

- UPMC Magee-Womens Services opened Level III neonatal intensive care units (NICUs) at UPMC Harrisburg and UPMC Lititz to care for babies born as early as 23 weeks' gestation. UPMC Memorial and UPMC Carlisle have Level II NICUs for babies born as early as 32 weeks' gestation.
- In September, UPMC opened an outpatient center in Mechanicsburg, continuing its growth on the UPMC West Shore campus. The 44,000-square-foot facility features relocated and expanded offices for the UPMC Heart and Vascular Institute and is the largest such facility across the UPMC system.
- The eight UPMC Hillman Cancer Centers in central Pennsylvania mean residents no longer need to leave the area for breast care, radiation oncology, genetic counseling and testing, clinical trials, and other specialty services.

Anticipating the health care needs of a growing community

In response to growth in York County, UPMC Memorial constructed a 104-bed hospital, an ambulatory surgical center, and the UPMC Hillman Cancer Center at UPMC Memorial to proactively ensure that residents can receive the highest quality care close to home.

Six years after opening a 150-bed acute-care hospital in Cumberland County, UPMC West Shore expanded its emergency department, adding 52 beds to help enhance access and ease the strain on local emergency services.



Consolidated Appropriations Act Section 204 (RxDC) requirement

Action item for employer groups

Section 204 of the Consolidated Appropriations Act (CAA) of 2021 and its implementing regulations require health insurance issuers and group health plans to report certain information regarding prescription drugs and health care spending (also known as RxDC reporting) to the U.S. departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, and Treasury.

To meet its obligations as a health insurer and to assist its group health plan clients, UPMC Health Plan Inc. and its affiliates (collectively known as UPMC Health Plan) are collecting certain required information from group clients.

Client communications

Group health plan clients should have received the following information regarding how to comply with the RxDC requirement:

“Please fill out the included Consolidated Appropriations Act Section 204 (RxDC) Data Collection Form and return it using the enclosed postage-paid envelope. You can also scan the completed form and email it to groupinfoupdates@upmc.edu. In accordance with UPMC Health Plan’s published FAQs, UPMC Health Plan will submit the required reports to the

applicable departments to the extent UPMC Health Plan has such information as a result of the services it provides to its fully insured and self-funded employer group clients. The reports will be provided by June 1, 2023, or in accordance with any updated time frames issued by the departments.

“Please note, if you do not respond in a timely manner, UPMC Health Plan will not submit this information on your behalf, and you may be required to submit this information directly to the departments.

“Please contact your account manager with any questions. Thank you for your assistance and for choosing UPMC Health Plan for your company’s benefits.”

To access the data collection form, [click here](#).



Prescription for Wellness: A free member resource for getting and staying healthy

Prescription for Wellness offers customized help with lifestyle and condition management, as well as shared decision support services. These services are personalized to help UPMC Health Plan members meet their goals. The best part? It's available at no cost to employers or members!

Members will work with our Prescription for Wellness team of health coaches and care managers. Health coaches can help members make lifestyle changes. Care managers can teach members how to manage health conditions. They can also help members understand their overall health care needs.

Prescription for Wellness team members hold professional degrees and licenses, and they work as:

- Registered nurses.
- Dietitians.
- Diabetes educators.
- Counselors.
- Social workers.

A health coach or care manager will:

- Use proven techniques to help members get results.
- Direct members to community and online resources.
- Talk to members as much or as little as members want.
- Help members improve their existing care or weight management and fitness efforts.

Getting started with Prescription for Wellness

It's easy for members to connect with the Prescription for Wellness team.

- For a virtual visit on [UPMC AnywhereCare](#), members can log in or register for a UPMC AnywhereCare account. Once they are logged in, they can select the Health Navigation tile. If a navigator is available, they can choose Visit Now. If a navigator is not available, they can schedule a visit.
- To start by phone, members can call **1-844-822-3367**. TTY users should call **711**. Help is available Monday through Friday from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m. and Saturday from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m.
- Members can ask their health care provider to set them up with a Prescription for Wellness.
- To use an app, members can download RxWell* from the App Store or Google Play™.

Personal Health Review: Having a personal health review is the important first step in many of our programs, including all lifestyle management programs. This session lasts for about 20 minutes, and it lays the foundation for a personal health plan and goals.



What is lifestyle management?

Lifestyle management means working with experts to start making healthy choices. Members will learn healthy behaviors that can lower their risk of disease and improve their quality of life. Our health coaches are available for individual or group appointments. Below are common lifestyle management topics:

- Weight management
- Physical activity
- Tobacco cessation
- Stress management
- Nutrition basics
- Diabetes prevention
- Family health
- Healthy sleeping patterns



Lifestyle management is available to people of all ages. UPMC Health Plan members can get help by phone, online, or through the RxWell app.

What is condition management?

Condition management is meant to help people better understand or manage a health condition. A care manager can help members understand their care options and prepare for a talk with their doctor about their condition. If the members has type 2 diabetes, asthma, or other conditions, a care manager can help them determine how to stay as healthy as possible. Below are common condition management topics:

- Diabetes
- Cardiovascular health
- Respiratory health
- Behavioral health
- Chronic pain

Additional care management programs

Baby Steps, UPMC Health Plan's maternity program:

Members can get support and useful information from registered nurses who focus on pregnancy and childbirth. These nurses are also certified in newborn nursing and

breastfeeding education. Coaches are available to help members before, during, and after pregnancy, and they are supported by licensed social workers.

[Learn more about maternity health coaching.](#)

Pediatric care management: Registered nurses and social workers can help mothers and their children in a number of ways.

- They can help find specialists, schedule visits, and prepare questions before doctor appointments.
- They can help coordinate local resources, in-home nursing, home health assistance, or daycare for children.
- They can help find behavioral health services and answer questions about different conditions, medicines, and resources.

Learn more about [pediatric preventive services.](#)

Case management: Case managers can help members get the services they need and understand their care plan. They can also provide caregiver support and help connect members with local programs and resources.

Condition management is available in a number of ways:

- UPMC AnywhereCare
- Phone
- RxWell app (diabetes)

What is shared decision making?

Shared decision making is when a member works with their health care provider to decide which treatment options are right for them. It can be done on the phone or virtually.

Members can work with their provider to answer these and other important questions:

- What are your health goals?
- What limitations do you have because of your health condition?
- What treatment will give you the quality of life you want?
- What side effects and risks are you willing to accept?
- How will the treatment you are considering affect you in the long term?
- What lifestyle changes might improve your health? Changes might involve being more physically active or eating healthier.

Shared decision making is especially important when it comes to:

- Optional surgeries, such as hip, knee, or bariatric surgery.
- Condition or pain management.
- Cancer treatment.

**RxWell is available to UPMC Health Plan members who are 16 years of age or older.*



Active&Fit Direct can help UPMC Health Plan members get healthy

Standard fitness center enrollment now available

Regular physical activity is one of the most important things people can do for their physical and emotional health. Exercise helps manage weight, reduces the risk of chronic diseases, and produces mood-boosting endorphins that can make you feel more upbeat and energized.

People are more likely to keep exercising if they find a schedule that works for them and activities they enjoy. Joining a gym can be a great way to get started.

UPMC Health Plan members and those who have an employer-sponsored wellness plan through Workpartners have access to the Active&Fit Direct™ program. This allows them to join one of more than 11,000 standard fitness centers nationwide for just \$25 a month (plus a \$25 enrollment fee and applicable taxes).

New premium exercise studios and fitness centers

Members can also choose from more than 5,500 premium options, with substantial discounts on most. Premium fitness centers include CycleBar, Stride, Club Pilates, Pure Barre, and others!

Benefits of Active&Fit Direct:

- Searchable fitness center directory
- More than 11,000 standard fitness centers and studios
- The option to switch standard fitness centers and find the

right fit

- Ability to enroll a spouse or domestic partner
- More than 5,500 premium studios and fitness centers
- More than 8,000 on-demand fitness video classes for use at home or on the go

How to enroll in the Active&Fit Direct program

UPMC Health Plan and wellness-only members can follow these steps to get started:

1. Log in to MyHealth OnLine, scroll down to Highlights from UPMC Health Plan, and click on Active&Fit Direct.
2. Create an Active&Fit Direct account.
3. Pay their fees and applicable taxes.
4. Enroll in the fitness center of their choice.

Participants must be 18 years of age, be located in the United States, and have a valid email address. Participants must pay by credit card and are charged in advance on a monthly basis using a recurring payment subscription. Participants commit to three consecutive months of membership. If a participant chooses to cancel, they must provide a 30-day notice of cancellation. All payments are subject to tax, if applicable, based on the participant's location. The Active&Fit Direct program is provided by American Specialty Health Fitness Inc., a subsidiary of American Specialty Health Incorporated (ASH). Active&Fit Direct is a trademark of ASH and used with permission herein.



Explore spending account options

Understand benefits for employees and employers

UPMC Consumer Advantage® offers a variety of spending and reimbursement account options.

Spending accounts options:

- Health care flexible spending accounts (HCFSAs)
- Health reimbursement arrangements (HRAs)
- Health savings accounts (HSAs)
- Health incentive accounts (HIAs) with debit card
- Qualified transportation accounts (QTAs)
- Dependent care flexible spending account (DCFSA)

Offering spending accounts can be an effective way for companies to contain costs for both their business and their employees. These accounts have annual maximums that are subject to change by the IRS.

Health care flexible spending accounts

Employees can use their tax-free savings to pay for qualified out-of-pocket health care expenses. Employers don't pay payroll taxes on the savings employees accumulate.

Employees can use their HCFSAs to pay for up to \$3,050 in qualified health expenses in 2023. This includes medical, dental, and vision expenses, plus prescription drugs that are not covered by their insurance plan. FSA contributions are automatically deducted from employees' paychecks.

Limited-purpose health care flexible spending accounts are similar to HCFSAs, but they only reimburse for dental, vision, and preventive care. Participation in this type of FSA allows employees to have a qualified health savings account.

Health reimbursement arrangements

HRAs are employee spending accounts that employers fund. Employees can use their HRA to help pay for health care deductibles and other out-of-pocket expenses.

Funds that employers contribute to HRAs are not considered wages and are not subject to income taxes, FICA (Social Security and Medicare), or workers' compensation.

Health savings accounts

Employees can use an HSA to pay for qualified health care expenses and save for future care costs. Employees own their HSAs and can take the funds if they retire or change jobs.

Employers can contribute to their employees' HSAs and allow employees to make contributions via payroll. Employees can also make tax-free contributions outside of payroll. Interest earned and dollars spent on qualified health care expenses are tax-free too. Employees can invest their funds once they reach a certain threshold.

Employees must be enrolled in a qualified high-deductible health plan to participate in an HSA, as mandated by the federal government.

Health incentive accounts

An HIA is a reimbursement account tied to a medical plan that encourages members to engage in healthy activities. The HIA gives employees the opportunity to earn reward dollars, then apply them to eligible out-of-pocket expenses, such as their deductible, coinsurance, and copayments.

Funds in an employee's HIA can automatically be applied to covered expenses, or a debit card can be provided for manual payment of qualified expenses.

Qualified transportation accounts

QTAs allow employees to make pretax contributions to pay for qualified transit or parking expenses related to their commute to work. Employers that offer a QTA option can also allow funds to roll over from year to year.

Dependent care reimbursement accounts

Employees can set aside up to \$5,000 annually to offset costs associated with the care of eligible children or elderly dependents. (Employees may set aside up to \$2,500 if they are married and file separate federal income tax returns.)

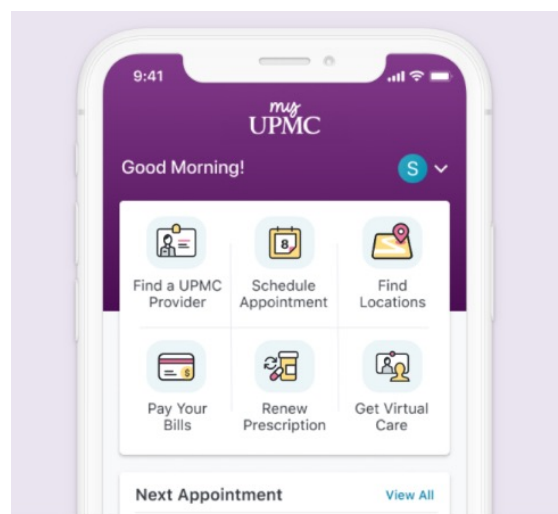


UPMC Enterprises leads the charge to transform care

The goal of UPMC Enterprises is to “forge partnerships and change health care by successfully transforming ideas into thriving health care businesses and life-changing medicine. To achieve this goal, UPMC Enterprises collaborates with a variety of partners, including scientists, investors, engineers, consultants, product managers and designers, clinicians, and others. Their mission-focused investments demand a multidisciplinary and creative workforce intent on helping UPMC remain ahead of the curve when it comes to providing the best care possible to its patients.”

One of the examples of this collaboration is the [MyUPMC app](#), which is the digital front door for UPMC. Its goal is to put patients’ health information where they need it most. The app allows UPMC patients to get virtual care, message their doctor, make appointments, renew prescriptions and more.

[Learn more about the innovations UPMC Enterprises has in motion.](#)



UPMC Hillman's advanced innovation hub expands personalized cancer treatment

By Lauren Lawley Head

Pittsburgh Business Times contributor

There is a fundamental shift happening in the field of cancer care.

Advances in understanding the human genome, coupled with breakthroughs in data science, are allowing researchers and clinicians to take a more personalized approach to treatment. The goal is to understand each patient's unique cancer or risk of cancer, develop medicines, and create precise treatments that target cancer at the cellular level.

This type of personalized or precision medicine is a [growing field](#) in cancer care, and UPMC Hillman Cancer Center aims to be a global leader. It is already recognized by the National Cancer Institute as a Comprehensive Cancer Center, [one of only 53 in the U.S.](#), and is home to the Institute for Precision Medicine.

"The NCI designation is important because it places us in a group of leaders," said Adrian Lee, PhD, director of the Institute for Precision Medicine. Lee, together with his wife, Steffi Oesterreich, PhD, conducts breast cancer research in the [Lee Oesterreich Laboratory](#). "Our focus in the lab is on taking a clinical question or issue and finding the patients or the tissues to work on (addressing) that by using the appropriate technology. That multidisciplinary approach of going from physicians to biobanking to pathologists to lab researchers to computational scientists requires a framework that brings together all those people. That's what the cancer center does."

'The fourth pillar of cancer care'

Innovation in precision medicine at UPMC Hillman and elsewhere is having a dramatic effect on patient outcomes, said Dario Vignali, PhD, interim chair of the University of Pittsburgh's Department of Immunology and co-leader of the Cancer Immunology and Immunotherapy Program for UPMC Hillman Cancer Center.

"Immunotherapy is now solidly the fourth pillar of cancer care, after surgery, radiotherapy and chemotherapy," Vignali said. "The potential for immunotherapy to transform cancer care is not only here but has been realized. By bringing the Immunology Department closer to the cancer center, we hope to expand on those opportunities."

Lee's lab has generated many important developments in the field. For example, when a patient has a breast cancer tumor removed, the lab is now able to grow that tumor in the lab, creating an avatar of what was going on in the patient's body. The goal is to ultimately be able to design and test a treatment on a patient's specific cancer before giving that treatment to the patient.

"This is totally new," Lee said. "Up to three or four years ago, our success rate for growing patient tissue was 5 percent or less. Now, we can grow nearly all the breast tumors successfully."

Building a biotech hub

The centerpiece of the advanced innovation hub is The Assembly, a 250,000-square-foot research facility across the street from UPMC Hillman's flagship Shadyside facility. It houses the Institute for Precision Medicine, the University of Pittsburgh's Department of Immunology, and other UPMC Hillman researchers.

Nearby is BlueSphere Bio and Novasenta, two Pitt UPMC biotech spin-offs that play a large role in the development of new therapies. Novasenta, which was co-founded by Vignali, works to discover novel targets to generate effective therapies for a variety of cancers. BlueSphere Bio creates TCR T-cell therapies that harness patients' immune response to potentially cure cancer.

Bringing all these cancer research components together under one roof and close by helps facilitate collaboration. Lee and Vignali's labs sometimes share graduate students, a process that could be more fruitful following their move to The Assembly.

"You take an immunologist and combine it with a cancer biologist, and you get this synergy," Lee said. "They're worth more together than they are apart."

A neighboring property, The Annex, is ready to serve as an incubator space.

"Space is a significant expense for biotech companies because they need high-quality space with the right infrastructure," said Vignali. "It's going to be cheaper in Pittsburgh than in some of the other biotech hubs in the country. These lower costs, plus UPMC Enterprises, is a big part of why a biotech hub is being created here. When other companies see things being started here, they may think, 'Something's happening in Pittsburgh. We should look into it.'"

"It's like a snowball rolling down the hill," he said. "It takes a while to get going, but once it gets a bit of momentum, we could see a lot of exciting things happening in the Pittsburgh region."

Learn more about the mission and research goals of UPMC Hillman Cancer Center's [Cancer Immunology and Immunotherapy Program](#).

[UPMC Hillman Cancer Center](#) is a National Cancer Institute (NCI)-designated Comprehensive Cancer Center and is harnessing the expertise of physicians, scientists and allied health care professionals who deliver comprehensive clinical care, lead cutting-edge research, train future generations of cancer experts and engage with our communities to detect, treat and prevent cancer.

Lauren Lawley Head is a freelance writer for The Business Journals Content Studio.



Top-ranked care: Our network of doctors and hospitals

The idea is simple: Combine knowledge and expertise to provide high-quality care.

Because UPMC Health Plan is part of the world-class academic medical center known as UPMC, we can offer our members access to top-ranked care and world-renowned innovation in addition to high-quality community providers.

But what do we mean by top-ranked care?

UPMC consistently appears on the annual *U.S. News & World Report* Honor Roll of America's Best Hospitals.

In addition, nearly 400 UPMC physicians were recognized as 2022 "Top Doctors" across more than 60 specialties. UPMC doctors represented more than half of the physicians listed in Pittsburgh. These physicians were part of the Top Doctors® list, which was compiled by Castle Connolly. The Castle Connolly Top Doctor selection process is entirely merit-based. Doctors cannot pay to be listed. Castle Connolly's peer-to-peer nominations and rigorous research process ensure only the most qualified physicians are included.

These rankings reflect the exceptional care delivered every day by UPMC's extraordinary doctors, nurses, and staff who truly define world-class care. It is reassuring to know that when patients from all over the region, nation, or world search for top care, their search leads them to the trusted doctors and hospitals that are close to home in Pittsburgh.



UPMC receives prestigious Catalyst Award Distinction

At UPMC, the culture of caring starts and ends with our people.

Since the health system's flagship hospital—Presbyterian Hospital, now UPMC Presbyterian—was established in 1893, UPMC has made intentional efforts to support and bolster diversity and inclusion. More than a century later, UPMC has been [honored with the 2023 Catalyst Award](#). This premier gender equity award recognizes organizations whose influential and pioneering initiatives accelerate and advance women and people of color into leadership roles.

The 2023 Catalyst Award theme is Accelerating Equity on All Fronts—So Women Thrive. It urges leaders to build more gender-equitable workplaces, from the frontlines to the C-suite.

A key success from UPMC's nomination was its five-year workforce demographic goal to increase representation of people of color and women in executive roles from 2016 to 2021. UPMC achieved a 96 percent increase in representation of people of color, and it made significant advancements—a 19 percent increase—in representation of women in executive roles.

UPMC's legacy of diversity

Representation of women and people of color is deeply rooted in UPMC's history.

- Strong women have always formed the backbone of health care, and it is fitting that a woman physician, [Louise Wotring Lyle, MD](#), contributed to UPMC's creation by founding Presbyterian Hospital in 1893.
- Women leaders have dedicated themselves to establishing facilities at UPMC that provide excellent care for patients. In 1992, Irma Goertzen, then Magee-Womens Hospital's chief executive officer, established the Magee-Womens Research Institute. This is the only academically affiliated research institute in the country that specifically focuses on health issues in women and infants. Without Goertzen's work, women's health care would have suffered.
- In 2013, UPMC established a systemwide set of core values. With support from UPMC executive and board leadership, the organization integrated these core values into performance evaluations, reaffirming its commitment to diversity and inclusion.

"Simply put, representation matters. We know firsthand that a diverse workforce is paramount to reduce health disparities, build trust, and break down barriers related to health care," said James E. Taylor, PhD, chief diversity, inclusion, and talent management officer at UPMC. "Seeing is believing. People need to see themselves in leadership roles in order to sustain and enhance our diverse workforce. Having broader representation at all levels ensures we have the knowledge, critical thinking, agility, and innovation required of a health system that now leads better and works toward building a more equitable future."

UPMC was honored at the Catalyst Awards Conference and Gala on Thursday, March 30, in New York City.