



**February 2024 | Jewish Healthcare Foundation news, events, milestones, & more**

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## Safety Innovation Summit Shares Cross-Sector Safety Solutions

On February 29, the Pittsburgh Regional Health Initiative (PRHI) and the Pittsburgh Technology Council convened 130 Pittsburgh leaders for the Safety Innovation Summit to discuss the region's long history of safety accomplishments and to share safety interventions and approaches that have proven successful in multiple industries. The Safety Innovation Summit reaffirmed Pittsburgh's immense talent and assets spearheading safety developments, philosophies, and strategies in transportation, energy, manufacturing, medicine, and construction.

Karen Wolk Feinstein, PhD said PRHI's commitment to patient safety and the reduction of error in health care was the initial inspiration for the Summit, but after a deeper look at the region's history and current work, the goal for the Summit was to plant a flag in Pittsburgh as the "Safety Capital of the World" and share critical learnings across industries.

"We have it here. We have the academic strengths, entrepreneurial leaders, and safety science degree programs to build up the workforce," Dr. Feinstein said. "Today we will hear about the present work in safety so we can look to the future."

A former employee of Alcoa, working with the late Paul O'Neill at the height of his influence as "the safety CEO," Pittsburgh Technology Council President and Chief Executive Officer Audrey Russo shared how O'Neill told her it was her job to make sure Pittsburgh is safe and to foster environments where people are safe to be themselves, safe to learn, safe to innovate, and safe to break boundaries.

"We need to create an opportunity for the intersections of tech and health care and come to the table with our deep roots with industry and creating a safe working environment," Russo said. "Let's plant the flag."

The full-day Summit was formatted with one-hour long panels, setup as hearings from each industry, providing an opportunity for each sector to share critical insights into how they've approached safety in the past and how they're building on that progress when looking to the future. In his welcome remarks, Kent McElhattan, founder of Industrial Scientific, former Chairman of the National Safety Council Board, and President of the McElhattan Foundation, shared the Foundation's vision is to eliminate death on the job by 2050. He underscored that significant progress has been made with workplace fatalities being reduced from 50,000 to 5,000 from 1911 to 1997, however getting below 5,000 has been a challenge he hopes technology and collaborative efforts like the Summit can start to address.

To set the stage for the panels, Jan Wachter, ScD, MBA, former professor of safety sciences, Indiana University of Pennsylvania, provided an overview of Western Pennsylvania's legacy in industrial safety, including the impact of Crystal Eastman, a lawyer, activist, reporter, and the



Jan Wachter provides a historical overview of workplace safety advances originating in Western Pennsylvania.



Karen Feinstein and TeleTracking Co-CEO Christopher Johnson discuss the barriers to innovation in health care during a fireside chat.

mother of industrial safety, who tracked workplace deaths at the turn of the century and was involved in drafting several pieces of legislation aimed at improving working conditions and protecting workers, including the first workers' compensation law in New York State. (More about Pittsburgh's labor history in Jan's op-ed [here](#).)

Department of Community & Economic Development (DCED) Deputy Secretary of Technology and Entrepreneurship Jen Gilburg shared the Shapiro Administration's [ten-year strategic plan](#) for economic development in Pennsylvania which serves as a blueprint to invest in economic growth to compete, make government work at the speed of business, building workforce,

to foster innovation, and build vibrant and resilient communities. Among the goals of the plan is the elevation of Pennsylvania from its dismal ranking of 48<sup>th</sup> in the nation for startup activity. Gov. Shapiro's 2024-25 budget includes \$600 million in new and expanded investments to enhance DCED's ability to implement the strategic plan and better serve businesses.

A fireside chat with Christopher Johnson, Co-CEO, [TeleTracking](#), a Pittsburgh-based company providing patient flow automation solutions to the healthcare industry, discussed the frontiers of safety surveillance and the barriers innovators face applying their innovation to the healthcare sector. Johnson noted the decades-long lag between the invention of the stethoscope in the early 1800s and its use among doctors, Johnson said there is always a hesitancy to introduce an innovation into the healthcare space.

"We're still working on it," Johnson said. "Health care is the most complicated business on the planet. It's a difficult environment with the most physically, mentally, and emotionally challenging job, and there is a trust problem around AI in particular." Despite the challenges, TeleTracking is working on creative ways to leverage its logistics infrastructure and data to improve care at the bedside.

In her closing remarks, Dr. Feinstein summarized some of the key themes of the conference including the interconnectedness of safety, transparency, and open disclosure; that safety is more than actions, it's a culture that needs to be cultivated and celebrated; that safety is collaborative work; the increasing convergence of safety and technology and how that intersection will only continue to grow; and that safety is a great emblem for Western Pennsylvania.

Other expert panelists who participated in the Summit included: Raghu Arunachalam, CEO, WorkVis.io; Paul Bartlett, principal engineer and head of systems engineering, Near Earth Autonomy; Nat Beuse, chief safety officer, Aurora; CDR Jean-Paul Chretien, MD, PhD, Biological Technologies Office Program Manager, DARPA; Marc Ferrari, administrator/training director, Pennsylvania Laborers' Education & Training Center; Zane N. Frund, PhD, MPH, MBA, executive director and global leader, Materials/Chemical Research & Sensor Development, MSA Safety; Frank Guyette, MD, MS, professor of emergency medicine, University of Pittsburgh; Kevin Kelley, representative, Local 449 Steamfitters; Himanshu Khurana, vice president of engineering, Industrial Specific; Karen Lightman, interim executive director of Safety 21 and executive director

of Metro21: Smart Cities Institute, CMU; Todd Moore, vice president of safety, CONSOL Energy; Ken Morris, safety representative, International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local 5; Michael Pinsky, MD, professor of critical care medicine, Bioengineering, Cardiovascular Diseases, Clinical & Translational Science, and Anesthesiology, University of Pittsburgh; Shawn Quimby, VP of operations technology, CNX; Chandan K. Sen, PhD, MS, associate vice chancellor for life

sciences innovation and commercialization, University of Pittsburgh; Evan Sevel, VP for Growth & Innovation, Digital Intelligence, Wabtec; Phil Spinella, MD, Professor of Surgery and Critical Care Medicine, co-director of the Trauma and Transfusion Medicine Research Center, associate medical director of the Center for Military Medicine Research, University of Pittsburgh; Kelly Trapani, Head of Environmental Health & Safety, Gecko Robotics; and Craig Waller, CEO, Rewyndr.



From left to right: Moderator Michael Wagner, Paul Bartlett, Nat Beuse, Karen Lightman, and Evan Sevel discuss autonomous transportation and safety.

Moderators included: Steven D. Irwin, JD, PRHI Board Co-Chair and partner of Leech Tishman; Michael Wagner, CEO, Edge Case Research; Pam Walaski, President-Elect, American Society of Professionals Board, and part-time faculty member, IUP Department of Safety Sciences; Joseph Losko, PhD, assistant professor in safety management, Slippery Rock University of Pennsylvania; and Ron Poropatich, MD, Director, Center for Military Medicine Research, University of Pittsburgh.

Read coverage of the event by the [Pittsburgh Business Times](#).

## Advance Screening of JHF's Patient Safety Innovation Documentary *The Pitch* Scheduled for March 12

You are invited to an advanced screening of the documentary "The Pitch: Patient Safety's Next Generation" on March 12 at 5 p.m. at the Manor Theater in Pittsburgh.

*The Pitch* portrays the serious challenge of patient safety and some unique solutions. Through expert interviews, recent technology breakthroughs, and one young innovator's journey into the frontiers of medicine, *The Pitch* offers a glimpse into the future of patient safety. Immediately following the screening, enjoy a conversation with Artur Dubrawski, featured expert in the film and professor at Carnegie Mellon University; Lee Harrison, MD, Professor of Medicine and Epidemiology at the School of Public Health and School of Medicine, University of Pittsburgh; Mike Eisenberg, director; Karen Wolk Feinstein, executive producer; and Dr. Paul Phrampus, medical director of Patient Safety at UPMC.



Reserve your tickets for the advanced screening of the new documentary [here](#). (Password: thepitch).

## JHF Visits Esteemed Slippery Rock University Safety Program Ahead of Summit

On February 26, members of the Jewish Healthcare Foundation's (JHF) senior staff travelled to Slippery Rock University (SRU) to visit with the leadership of their Safety Management Department and tour their training facilities. Dr. Angela Bernardo, associate professor, Dr. Joseph Cali, department chair and professor, Dr. Joseph Losko, assistant professor, and Dr. Rona Smeak, associate professor, provided staff a comprehensive tour of the state-of-the-art, hands-on



Pictured from left to right: Dr. Joseph Cali, Dr. Rona Smeak, Dr. Joseph Losko, Dr. Karen Feinstein, and Robert Ferguson in SRU's safety training facility.

facilities SRU provides to its safety management students. SRU's safety management program is consistently ranked among the top safety training programs in the country, and its facilities have been supported by regionally based MSA Safety and New Pig Corporation to include top-industry equipment.

The visit provided JHF staff with insight into the many regional educational assets available to support a vision of Western Pennsylvania serving as a global hub for safety innovation. SRU is one of many universities clustered in the area offering top safety science degrees.

## Pennsylvania Teens Unite: JHF's PA Youth Advocacy Network Launches Third Annual Series

Jewish Healthcare Foundation's [PA Youth Advocacy Network](#) kicked off its third annual advocacy series for high school teens on January 31. Twenty-seven students from 22 schools and 8 counties across the Commonwealth are participating in the eight-week virtual series focusing on advocacy skills development.



Mental wellness and trauma specialist Dr. Dana Milakovic discussed with youth advocates how important their voice is in shaping priorities and policy.

Session topics include coalition building, crafting a compelling personal story, using data for advocacy, and policy change. Participants work in teams throughout the series to share youth perspectives around the PA Youth Advocacy Network's [youth-led Advocacy platform](#) to strengthen teen mental health systems and supports. Areas of focus include excused mental health days, increasing access to school counseling resources, mental health curriculum in schools, substance use prevention, everyday activism, and raising awareness.

Seven youth leaders, including alumni from the series, are participating as youth facilitators, sharing their advocacy experiences and working with each of their teams to develop a plan for

gathering and sharing youth perspectives. In addition to helping with facilitating the sessions, teen facilitators presented strategies and tips for getting started in advocacy. Ja’Nya Coleman, a PA Cyber School student and WQED Film Academy graduate, and Connor Dalgaard, a sophomore at Vassar College and network alum, presented about communications and the use of creative media. Rikki Shukla shared her experience as a researcher at the US Department of State using data for advocacy.

“I participated in the Advocacy Series back in 2023. I learned so much, and it helped me get started in my advocacy work,” said Ja’Nya Coleman. “I’m now a youth facilitator for the Advocacy Series, and it’s rewarding to be able to help students, teach them about advocacy, and help them grow as future advocates.”

“Facilitating the advocacy series has been an eye-opening experience, revealing a growing desire in Pennsylvania youth to make a positive change in mental health understanding. It’s also helped me to become more comfortable leading conversations and speaking in front of people,” said Tyler Nolt, an alumnus of the series. “I’m extremely proud of the impact I’ve been able to make throughout the state as well as in myself.”

In February, participants created and compared community maps to identify mental health resources in their schools and communities. They also learned about the importance of self-care in advocacy, particularly when advocating around mental health, and developed their self-care plans. They explored various types of media and data and discussed how each could be used for advocacy around mental health.

Dr. Dana Milakovic, PsyD, NCSP, Mental Wellness, and Trauma Specialist – Office for Safe Schools, PA Department of Education, shared the importance of youth voice in shaping government priorities.

The series continues until Wednesday, March 20<sup>th</sup>, when participants will present their perspectives and ideas for improving teen mental health support in schools and communities.

## BH Fellows Expands with Third Cohort

The third cohort of BH Fellows convened for their kickoff retreat on February 20<sup>th</sup> at Phipps Conservatory. This cohort of fellows includes a mix of 18 new and experienced family-based therapists and clinicians, substance use disorder case managers, service coordinators, and crisis clinicians from seven providers across Allegheny County.

The BH Fellows program is an Allegheny County-sponsored workforce initiative, created and managed in partnership between the Allegheny County Department of Human Services, Community Care Behavioral Health, and the Jewish Healthcare Foundation (JHF). JHF serves as



The first session of the BH Fellows program was a one-day retreat at Phipps Conservatory.

the lead partner for developing and implementing the professional development for the fellows and directing recruitment efforts.

BH Fellows provides educational loan repayments (up to \$25,000 for participants with a bachelor's degree or up to \$45,000 for participants with a master's degree), competitive salaries, and career development experiences within a cohort model in exchange for a two-year commitment to work at an approved provider within a specific behavioral health role.

The third cohort joins the already-enrolled 44 participating fellows. They all have the benefit of networking across the cohorts and the ongoing leadership and professional development program. Two additional cohorts will also be joining later in 2024.

Applications for the summer cohort are now closed for those looking for jobs, but existing staff can still apply until April 15. The fall 2024 cohort is now accepting applications for those seeking a new position in a behavioral health job. [Visit here](#) for more program details and to apply.

## The Maternal Health Crisis is a Workforce Issue. Here's How Employers Can Respond

How employers can support employees during pregnancy, birth, and postpartum to help address the maternal health crisis was highlighted in an op-ed by Karen Feinstein published in the *Pittsburgh Business Times*. Read the full op-ed through [this open-access link](#).



## AIDS Free Pittsburgh Marks Black HIV/AIDS Awareness Day with Discussions and Testing

February 7th is recognized as National Black HIV AIDS Awareness Day. This year AIDS Free Pittsburgh (AFP) supported partner organizations with two events over two days.

The first event was held on the evening of February 6 at 1Hood Media with Allies for Health and Wellbeing providing HIV and STI testing, and the second event was hosted by TransYouniting at the QMNTY Center on February 7 with Macedonia FACE and AHN Positive Health Clinic providing



Chautney Porter, Rev. Deryck Tines, Dr. Ken Ho, and Ethan Rhabb discuss the disparities in care and outcomes experienced by Black people with HIV and AIDS.

HIV and STI testing. Other partners and sponsors for this event series included Hugh Lane Wellness, Gilead, Highmark Health, UPMC and the University of Pittsburgh. There were over 100 attendees across the two events.

The first event included a town hall and panel discussion. The second event included testimonials from individuals impacted by HIV and a performance by local singer Ayanna Sade. Pittsburgh City Council Member Khari Mosley read the city-wide proclamation to bring more awareness to the HIV epidemic, services available for communities and individuals impacted by HIV, and to recognize February 7th as Black HIV Awareness Day in the City.

At both events, partners recognized the disparities in care and outcomes for Black people in comparison to their white counterparts and health disparities that exist for men, women, and individuals of trans experience. The testing agencies reported that a total of 25 people opted for HIV and STI screening over the two-day event series. Event hosts and partners recognize the need to continue to center Black people, especially men who have sex with men and transgender women, in conversations and efforts to end the HIV epidemic.

## PA Teaching Nursing Home Collaborative Welcomes Over 50 New Members

In the past six months, the PA Teaching Nursing Home Collaborative (PA TNHC) has grown by nearly 20 schools of nursing and 40 nursing homes from across the Commonwealth.

Led by the Jewish Healthcare Foundation and Health Careers Futures together with The John A. Hartford Foundation, the PA TNHC is the evolution of the Revisiting the Teaching Nursing Home pilot project (2021-2023) which engaged three schools of nursing and four nursing homes. The new Collaborative members will strengthen or establish academic practice partnerships with their nursing home or school counterparts while using the Age-Friendly Health Systems framework to enhance care for nursing home residents. Nursing students will also strengthen their gerontological nursing skills and gain exposure to long-term care career pathways.

The Collaborative's newly launched website ([www.patnhc.org](http://www.patnhc.org)), Learning Series webinars, and guidance from statewide and national experts will support organizations throughout their Teaching Nursing Home experience.



## Older Adults Engage in Conversations on the End of Life in Osher “Closure” Course

On February 14, members of the Jewish Healthcare Foundation (JHF) end-of-life team concluded the annual “Closure: Discussing the Last Chapter” course, offered through the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at Carnegie Mellon University. Twenty-four older adults with a broad range of professional backgrounds joined the virtual course to increase their understanding of issues around planning for the end of life and the very personal concepts of what constitutes “a good life” and “a good death.”



Nancy Zions, JHF COO and chief program officer, Judy Black, MD, MHA, JHF medical advisor, and Lisa George, program manager for communications and aging initiatives, led participants during the five-week course.

JHF medical adviser Dr. Judy Black leads the Osher “Closure” session.

In the series kickoff on January 17, participants shared their reasons for electing to take the course, including seeking guidance on advance care planning for themselves and their elderly parents, tips for initiating conversations about making end-of-life decisions with their children, and guidance on managing conflict with family members involved in decision making. Using narratives of other people’s “last chapters” and practical tools and resources, the course helped to destigmatize and demystify the process of talking about death and dying as well as how to make the most of their own “next-to-last chapter” and live well later in life.

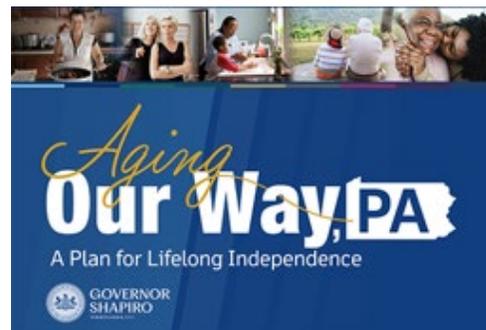
Sessions focused on advance care planning, POLST (Pennsylvania Orders for Life-Sustaining Treatment), palliative care, and hospice. During the POLST session, participants broke into small groups to discuss case studies presented by Dr. Black and guest faculty Rachel Ombres, MD, outpatient palliative care medicine physician at Allegheny Health Network and medical director for Highmark Health's Enhanced Community Care Management program, and Libby Moore, LSW, DHCE, director of guardianship at Federated Guardians. The series finale featured guest faculty Fredric Price, MD, former chief of gynecologic oncology at Allegheny Health Network, who spoke about healthcare decision making at the end of life, as well as a presentation by Zions on grief, funeral planning, and organ donation. Throughout the course, participants share their appreciation for the faculty’s expertise and the extensive resources provided.

This course complements JHF’s slate of end-of-life educational offerings, which include the Death and Dying Fellowship for graduate students, the Death and Dying Series for Healthcare Professionals, as well as the POLST online continuing education modules.

## Pennsylvania's "Aging Our Way" Plan Opens for Public Comment

Pennsylvanians are encouraged to submit comments to the state's "[Aging Our Way, PA](#)" draft plan now through March 20, 2024.

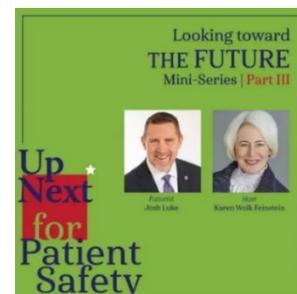
The plan is the state's 10-year roadmap to empower its growing population of older adults through services and supports, as highlighted in [Governor Shapiro's 2024-2025 budget proposal](#). The Pennsylvania Department of Aging will work with other state agencies to implement strategies which span five areas: Unlocking Access, Aging in Community, Gateways to Independence, Caregiver Supports, and Education & Navigation.



The Jewish Healthcare Foundation's Aging Initiatives program managers Anneliese Perry, MS, NHA, and Stacie Bonenberger, MOT/OTR/L, supported the plan's development in 2023 by drafting its strategies related to increasing social inclusion for older adults. [Submit comments online via this form](#).

## Up Next for Patient Safety Podcast Looks to the Future of Healthcare Through the Lens of Economic Sustainability and Safety

The business of health care faces a multitude of challenges to rein in costs while improving on and delivering safe, high-quality care. How can improved safety and reducing avoidable hospitalizations play in the economic landscape for health systems? Join host Karen Wolk Feinstein and health system CEO and futurist Josh Luke for a compelling conversation on the keys to changing the status quo and bolstering the industry for a stronger future. [Listen now](#).



## Three Patient Safety Technology Challenge Competitions Announce Winning Innovations

The Patient Safety Technology Challenge announced the winners of IrvineHacks, Hacking Health at Columbia, and ASUio, sponsored events that took place since late-January on both coasts of the United States.

Meddit won the patient safety track for best tech-enabled patient safety solution at this year's IrvineHacks, held January 26-28 at the University of California, Irvine (UCI)



Reel Free team members Austin and Alex Pollock (middle left and middle right) are presented with a check with ASUio judge Dr. David Mayer, Director Emeritus, MedStar Institute for Quality and Safety, MedStar Health, and Sparky the Sun Devil, ASU's mascot.

campus. Awarded the best tech-enabled patient safety solution, Meddit provides exclusive and anonymous spaces for hospitals' medical communities to share their experiences around medical harm. Through Meddit, staff can be inspired to report errors rather than hide them and spread awareness of some of the most common medical errors to prevent other medical workers from committing the same mistakes in the future. Meddit team members included UCI students Alina Sheikh, Hanshal Dabburu, Raviteja Tammana, and Rithwik Saikrishna Garapati. They each awarded a pair of AirPods Pro as their prize.

This year's Hacking Health, a healthcare hackathon, organized by the Columbia Biomedical Engineering Society (BMES), took place at Columbia University on February 3-4. The overarching theme of the hackathon was patient safety with all students tasked to dream up ways of reducing patient harm. Patient Safety Technology Challenge awarded \$2,000 worth of prizes to a total of six teams.

Anti-Sepsis received the grand prize for the "Best Patient Safety Hack" which was a set of luxury headphones for each member of the team. Anti-Sepsis created a health tracker device to assess a patient's sepsis susceptibility using standard sepsis testing metrics, including complete blood count, lactate level, and other biochemical markers. Based on the metrics, the device will provide patients with therapy and recovery plans on the screen. Team members include Siqi Wang, Xinya Shang, Huachen Shan, and Zhiheng Shi, all Columbia University students. The runner-up was Pharmany, a personalized patient drug portfolio generating drug-drug interaction reports for medical professionals. The all-Columbia team took home Bluetooth speakers. Four other teams took home prizes such as phone chargers and movie tickets for their innovative patient safety solutions.

Arizona State University's Innovation Open (ASUio) awards ceremony was held on February 9 on ASU's campus. Twenty-six finalists traveled from across the U.S. and abroad representing students from Arizona, Michigan, Illinois, Texas, and Rhode Island, as well as Germany, Austria, and the UK. Reel Free won the \$10,000 prize for the best tech-enabled patient safety solution. Reel Free team members Austin and Alex Pollock created a medical device that retracts 50-feet of oxygen tubing to prevent falls among supplemental oxygen users. The innovation was inspired by their grandfather who fell and broke his hip after tripping on his oxygen tubing.

## Three New Competitions Added to the Patient Safety Technology Challenge

Three new competitions have been added to the Patient Safety Technology Challenge. Funded by the Jewish Healthcare Foundation and administered by Pittsburgh Regional Health Initiative, the Patient Safety Technology Challenge is designed to fuel the engagement of students and innovators in creating solutions and envisioning transformational approaches to reduce preventable harm from medical errors.

Healthcare Hackathon with AI (H2AI), hosted by



Georgetown University, is a 36-hour hackathon being held April 12-14. H2AI will invite clinicians, students, and industry partners in the DMV area (Washington DC, Maryland, Virginia). H2AI aims to bring together the brightest minds to create innovative ideas in generative AI and medicine to tackle real-world clinical challenges, with a special award for the best innovation in patient safety. Learn more [here](#).

CatHacks, hosted by the University of Kentucky, will host their 10<sup>th</sup> annual hackathon beginning April 12<sup>th</sup>. CatHacks is proud to be the first national college hackathon in the state of Kentucky. Students from across the nation are invited to participate in this 24-hour hackathon. High school students are also welcome to apply. The Patient Safety Technology Challenge is sponsoring a \$500 prize for the best tech-enabled patient safety solution. Learn more [here](#).

LA Hacks, Southern California's largest hackathon, will be hosted by UCLA on April 19-20 in the Pauley Pavilion, the indoor arena and home of the UCLA Bruins basketball teams. LA Hacks will bring together 1,400+ developers, designers, and creatives who will have the opportunity to create apps, software, hardware, or other products using different technologies to create solutions and win prizes. The Best of Patient Safety Tech prize will be given under the Health + Wellness Track. The winning team will receive PS5s for each team member. Their theme this year is The Grand Adventure, which aims to challenge students to venture into the unknown and celebrate the thrilling journey of creativity and collaboration by solving real-world problems, embracing uncertainty, and making a lasting impact. Learn more [here](#).

Learn more about these competitions, and other related patient safety competitions [here](#).

## **JHF Welcomes Teresa Thomas as Communications and Governance Services Associate**

Teresa Thomas, MS, joins the Jewish Healthcare Foundation staff as the communications and governance services associate. In this role, she will provide administrative support to the Executive Office and senior staff, preparing for board meetings, events and conferences, writing and proofreading collateral, and contributing to team projects, among other duties. She is an experienced communications professional and educator, starting her career as a reporter in the Mon Valley and in public relations at the University of Pittsburgh. Thomas was assistant vice president for media relations at Carnegie Mellon University, where she advanced stories about the university and the region's strengths. She taught crisis communications in executive education programs at Carnegie Mellon's business and policy schools. Thomas consulted for area nonprofits as she worked toward a Master of Science degree in professional counseling from Carlow University. Thomas earned her undergraduate degree in English Writing from the University of Pittsburgh. She is a member of Phi Beta Kappa.



## Mike Eisenberg Captures the Pulse and Possibility of Patient Safety Innovation in New JHF-Funded Documentary

In the realm of filmmaking, some creators elevate the art of storytelling; they become catalysts for change, igniting conversations and sparking movements. One such creator is Mike Eisenberg, whose journey from the baseball diamond to the director's chair has brought issues of patient safety to the forefront through his documentary films.

A native of Philadelphia with roots in the DC area, Eisenberg's path to film took a detour through the world of professional baseball. Eisenberg helped lead Marietta College to a Division III National Championship before being drafted as a pitcher by the Cleveland Indians in the 2006 Major League Baseball Draft. Moving to Chicago after his brief pro baseball career, Eisenberg discovered his true calling at the Tribeca Flashpoint Academy, where he honed his craft and emerged as a creative force alongside his wife Kailey. Together, they founded Tall Tale Productions, a production company dedicated to crafting compelling documentary-style films and commercial shorts.



While Eisenberg's initial foray into filmmaking with *Whoop Dreams* garnered attention for its exploration of subcultures, it was his sophomore effort, *To Err is Human: A Patient Safety Documentary*, that propelled him into the spotlight.

*To Err is Human* was inspired by the legacy of his father, the late Dr. John Eisenberg. A pioneer in medical decision making, quality improvement, and patient safety, Dr. Eisenberg served as the Director for the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ; formerly called the Agency for Health Care Policy and Research) of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), from 1997 until shortly before his death from a brain tumor in 2002. He also served as the Senior Advisor to the Secretary of HHS on Quality; cochaired the Department's Data Council; chaired the Federal Quality Interagency Coordination Task Force; and served as Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for Health and as Acting Assistant Secretary for Health.

With *To Err is Human*, Eisenberg embarked on a three-year in-depth documentary film project to shed light on the epidemic of preventable medical error in health systems and those working quietly behind the scenes to create a patient safety revolution.

"At first, we did the project because we wanted AHRQ to be respected and fully funded. But as we were making the project, it really became about showcasing patient safety, not through stories of tragedy, horror, and harm, but through the stories of people doing the work to improve it," Eisenberg explained.

By taking his father's positive, and sometimes humorous, approach to improving quality in health care, Eisenberg has found new ways to promote a culture of safety at the healthcare organizations that invite him to speak at screenings and panel discussions across the globe.

When asked what his father would think about his work, Eisenberg said, “I do think about it a lot. I think he would be annoyed that he was in it. I’ve snuck C-SPAN footage of him into each of the films because I just felt they needed that cameo. He passed away when I was 18, so filmmaking wasn’t even a blip on my radar yet. But my dad’s efforts guided the approach in creating *To Err Is Human* in 2019 and continues to inspire our work with *The Pitch*. I’m sure he would be proud of that.”

In January 2023, JHF approved a grant for Tall Tale Productions to produce a 60-minute feature-length documentary film about the evolving role of technology in improving patient safety. *The Pitch: Patient Safety’s Next Generation* delves into the intersection of healthcare innovation and patient safety by telling the story of one innovator Reetam Ganguli, a Brown MD candidate and OB/GYN machine learning (ML) researcher who has developed Elythea, a tool that identifies the risk factors that are otherwise undetected until later stages of pregnancy, giving the mother time to prepare.

The crew of Tall Tale Productions found Reetam through the University of San Diego’s Fowler Global Social Innovation Competition where he won a \$5,000 prize (from JHF’s Patient Safety Technology Challenge) to help him scale his idea.

“Reetam feels like the perfect example of what young innovators are like. He talks fast; he thinks quickly; he’s always prepared. But he’s young, so he has this view of the world that it’s his for the taking,” Eisenberg said.

For Reetam, the stakes of his innovation are somewhat personal. After receiving a screening diagnosis that he is at high risk for developing cancer due to hereditary factors, he becomes motivated to leave a mark on the world. He created Elythea to provide diagnosis to pregnant women before birth to provide them and their infants with the opportunity to respond and live full lives.

Reetam’s story is just one of the 2,174 students found through the Patient Safety Technology Challenge-sponsored innovation events. All the winning competitors sponsored through the Patient Safety Technology Challenge from September 2022 through mid-2023 were screened for the film.

Eisenberg said that unlike *To Err is Human*, *The Pitch* was created with a much shorter production runway, which Eisenberg said was intimidating at first but inspired the team to focus more sharply, be prepared, and make deliberate decisions about the innovators and narratives to include in the film.

“We had a great team, and JHF had already done a lot of the work for us. I think this movie works because JHF had already experienced the landscape of technology and patient safety and were able to get us into contact with people while giving us the creative freedom and autonomy to tell the story for maximum impact. That is very rare in filmmaking,” Eisenberg said, lauding the expertise of JHF President and CEO Karen Wolk Feinstein, PhD, Pittsburgh Regional Health Initiative Patient Safety Consultant Ariana Longley, MPH, and JHF Chief Communications Officer Scotland Huber, MS.

By a curious turn of events, Mike's father John was an early advocate of PRHI and Karen attributes their successful launch—and her just-in-time education in patient safety—to John's mentorship.

Eisenberg's message is clear: innovation in healthcare requires collaboration, dedication, and a relentless pursuit of solutions. That message speaks to a trifecta of stakeholders: Healthcare systems, innovators, and patients. The film calls healthcare leaders to be open to the promise of new technology, innovators to turn their expertise and focus to patient safety, and audience members to look at their own healthcare systems to ask if their needs are being met and how technology can assist their providers in getting them the best care.

When asked where he'll turn his camera next, Eisenberg said without hesitation "a conch shell blowing competition in Key West, Florida." His next documentary will focus on the complex history of the conch shell and how it is a species on the brink of extinction. But for now, Eisenberg is preparing for the responsibilities beyond production, acknowledging the importance of his role as a spokesperson for the film.

"That's a huge responsibility that I take very seriously...It tells you something that makes you want to keep talking about it. And that's why I think this movie is going to have legs. It doesn't answer all your questions, but it presents a world that is still unfolding, and one that you can make an impact on," Eisenberg said.