

## President's Message

Thank you to our members, sponsors, speakers, and staff for making the Coalition's 39th Annual Conference a huge success. A record attendance of 300 participants had the opportunity to hear from excellent speakers, learn about our 33 sponsors, and network with colleagues and friends. Thank you for the positive, constructive, and sound feedback you provided us. We are already working to make next year's Conference, which will mark the Coalition's 40 anniversary, the best ever.

I marked my two-year anniversary as Coalition President on June 5. In taking this position, I set out to build on the success of previous Coalition leadership, and in reflecting on the last two years, I believe we have stayed true to that intent. As a result, we have seen the Coalition continue to grow and develop in many ways including:

- **Membership Growth and Engagement:** Membership has grown to 230 members, up 20% over the past two years. Our members are fully engaged in Coalition activities with Annual Conference growth of 50% since 2017.
- **Expanded Educational Opportunities:** So far this year, we have conducted a total of 11 educational programs including offerings in the Reading and Pottsville areas. Topics have included medical marijuana, specialty drugs, and the dental landscape. In May, we co-sponsored the 6<sup>th</sup> Annual Healthcare Systems Engineering Symposium with Lehigh University.
- **Enhanced Purchasing Programs:** At the end of last year we named new medical partners – Capital BlueCross and Geisinger, and earlier this year we announced a new vision plan partner – EyeMed. Later this summer, for the first time, we will be adding a small pharmacy benefits manager (PBM) partner.
- **Regional Expansion:** Over the past year we also partnered with the NEPA MAEA to offer our purchasing programs to their members. This expands the Coalition's reach into northeast and central Pennsylvania, as well as increases member's pooled purchasing power.



None of the current success is possible without the work of hundreds of individuals that have served the Coalition since 1980. This includes individuals like Edward Donley of Air Products & Chemicals, the Coalition's first Board Chair, and Robert Ivancevich, the Coalition's first Executive Director, who along with the founding 44 employers set out ***to foster health care cost containment measures in the community, without lessening the quality of that care.***

Please join us in building on our founders' vision for the Coalition by attending events, joining committees, and otherwise becoming a more active member by sharing your thoughts and feedback with our team. To find out more about Coalition activities, please take the time to read the Summer Newsletter, and if you are interested in getting more involved, contact Donna Corsi, Director of Member Programs and Services at [dmcorsi@lvbch.com](mailto:dmcorsi@lvbch.com).

Thank you and wishing all of you a safe and healthy summer,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Carl Seitz". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

**Carl Seitz,  
LVBCH President**

# WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Please join us in extending a warm welcome to the following new members of the Coalition as we encourage them to participate in Coalition activities.

- ◆ ELMC Rx Solutions LLC
- ◆ EyeMed
- ◆ Greater Nanticoke Area School District
- ◆ Habitat for Humanity of the Lehigh Valley
- ◆ Hanover Area School District
- ◆ Lehigh Valley Technology Company
- ◆ Lifepath, Inc.
- ◆ Luzerne Intermediate Unit
- ◆ Northeast PA School District Health Trust
- ◆ Pocono Mountain School District
- ◆ Stellar Technology Solutions
- ◆ Tunkhannock Area School District
- ◆ West Side Career & Technical Center
- ◆ Wilkes-Barre Area School District
- ◆ Wilkes-Barre Career & Technical Center
- ◆ Wilson Area School District
- ◆ Wyoming Area School District
- ◆ Wyoming Valley West School District

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### Save the Date

Be sure to mark your calendar for the upcoming LVBCH Events.

### Medical Marijuana Update

- August 22, 2019
- At Penn State Berks Campus, Reading
- All employer members are invited to attend



### Pharmacy Government Affairs Update with Express Scripts

- September 18, 2019
- At Melt, Center Valley
- In-person meetings for employers and consultants/brokers

### Documentary Screening: *A Touch of Sugar*

- October 9, 2019
- At ArtsQuest, Bethlehem
- All are invited to attend
- An expert reaction panel following the screening

### LVBCH's 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Annual Conference

- May 6, 2020
- At DeSales University, Center Valley
- All are invited to attend. Please join us in celebrating this milestone!

## Q&A with LVBCH Board Member Juliet Vestal

Please join LVBCH in welcoming Board member **Juliet Vestal**, Vice President, Corporate Benefits & HR Administration, B. Braun Medical Inc. *News Notes* recently had the opportunity to ask Juliet a few questions.



**Q: How long have you been involved with the Coalition? What led you to get involved initially?**

I have been involved with the Coalition for approximately one year, while B. Braun Medical has been a supporter of the Coalition for many years. My predecessor was heavily involved and when I assumed the role, I continued our involvement.

**Q: What activities have you participated in?**

I am Chair of the Purchasing Committee. The Coalition’s purchasing power is a significant benefit for member companies. Through its relationships and contracts with various providers of benefits, the Coalition is able to offer B. Braun, as well as other LVBCH employer members, comprehensive and affordable benefit options. The Coalition is able to leverage the buying power of the all of the companies it represents. As an employer, you can get much better rates when purchasing through the Coalition than any single company could alone.

**Q: On a personal level, how have you most benefitted from your involvement with LVBCH?**

Personally, I was brand new to the Lehigh Valley when I took the job, having previously worked in Las Vegas. Both in Las Vegas and here, I have been responsible for purchasing benefits for employees on a national level, however, there are important differences. My involvement with LVBCH has helped me get up to speed in my understanding of provider relationships and benefit contracting in this area. Through my involvement with the Coalition, I quickly learned about the intricacies of healthcare in the Lehigh Valley. For example, here we have two primary health care delivery systems, Lehigh Valley Health Network and St. Luke’s University Health Network. My colleagues in the Coalition helped me to understand the effect that having two competitive networks has on the delivery of services. In addition, they have explained the nuances of working with our various benefit providers.

**Q: What would you say to a company considering joining the Coalition?**

I have enjoyed my involvement with the Coalition and credit Carl’s leadership for moving the organization forward. Not only does the Coalition offer timely and informative employer education, Carl and his staff have done great things to expand LVBCH’s offerings and make it very inclusive. We’re industry agnostic. We provide better purchasing power so that companies of all types can benefit from membership. LVBCH’s benefit options are designed for companies of all sizes from very small to very large. Even if you’re a company with only 20 employees, we have something to offer you. The Coalition has something for everyone.

## LVBCH Selects EyeMed as Preferred Partner

The Lehigh Valley Business Coalition on Healthcare (LVBCH) has selected EyeMed as its new vision plan partner.



“Our extensive review process demonstrated that EyeMed offers LVBCH members the largest vision network, enhanced product features, preferred pricing, and award-winning customer service,” said LVBCH President Carl Seitz. “This partnership provides LVBCH’s employer members more flexibility to customize a vision plan that best meets their needs.”

Using a market-based approach, the Coalition negotiates rates that are exclusive to employer members and better than individual employers could obtain on their own. See page 6 for more information, or contact **Pete Sarpong**, EyeMed Senior Sales Executive, at [psarpong@eyemed.com](mailto:psarpong@eyemed.com).

## LVBCH Bestows Leadership in Wellness Awards

LVBCH presented its 2019 Leadership in Wellness Award recipients during the 39<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference on May 2.

**Erin Postel** of BeneFIT Coporate Wellness and a member of LVBCH's Education and Wellness Committee, announced the awards to this year's recipients:

- **Daniel Gagnier**, Equinox Agency
- **M. Theresa Schwartz**, Univest Finance
- **Bishop Alfred Schlert**, Diocese of Allentown, in memory of **Thomas O. Kern**



Left to right: **Carl Seitz**, LVBCH; **Jill Weaver** and **Annie Kern** Diocese of Allentown; **M. Theresa Schwartz**, Univest; **Daniel Gagnier**, Equinox Agency; **Erin Postel**, BeneFIT Corporate Wellness; and **Kevin Davis**, Univest

In presenting the awards, Postel was joined by LVBCH President Carl Seitz and Kevin Davis of Univest. Seitz said that in addition to benefitting employees, research suggests that companies with healthy employees have lower absenteeism, increased work productivity, lower health plan costs, and lower turnover. Postel credited the recipients with leading by example.

## LVBCH Supports Charitable Organizations

### *American Cancer Society & Cancer Support Community Recognized*

LVBCH is pleased to support organizations that improve the health and welfare of the communities we serve. As part of this effort, the Coalition's Board of Directors presented a contribution to the American Cancer Society and the Cancer Support Community of the Greater Lehigh Valley at the LVBCH Annual Conference.

LVBCH's contribution to the American Cancer Society will support community events in Lehigh, Northampton, and Berks Counties that help spread awareness and support the organizational mission to free the world from cancer. These events include several *Relay for Life* events, the Golf 4 ACSLV tournament, and the *Making Strides Against Breast Cancer Lehigh Valley Walk*, which will be held on Saturday, October 26 at ArtsQuest.

LVBCH's contribution to the Cancer Support Community of the Greater Lehigh Valley helps benefit the individuals and families served by the Cancer Support Community. This includes psychosocial support services as part of comprehensive cancer care. The support groups, educational programs, and healthy activities offered by the Cancer Support Community help participants regain control of their health, reduce stress and isolation, and restore a sense of hope for improved quality of life during treatment and in survivorship.

#### Cancer Support Community



Left to right: **Carl Seitz**, LVBCH; **Eileen Zielinski**, PPL; **Amanda Buss**, Cancer Support Community; **Jeannine O'Callaghan**, C.F. Martin & Co.; and **Jack Gross**, Gross McGinley, LLP.

#### American Cancer Society



Left to right: **Carl Seitz**, LVBCH, **Eileen Zielinski**, PPL; **Mark Stankiewicz** and **Kristina Cole**, American Cancer Society; **Jack Gross**, Gross McGinley, LLP; and **Jeannine O'Callaghan**, C.F. Martin & Co.



### Webinar Introduces EyeMed, New Vision Benefit Provider

EyeMed, LVBCH's new vision plan partner, offers flexible design plans that include comprehensive eye exams and lenses, as well as allowances for frames and contact lens, **Brian Boose**, Regional Vice President, EyeMed, said during a June 12<sup>th</sup> webinar.

EyeMed combines helpful communications, online tools and award-winning customer service to make its benefits easy for employees to use. In fact, 98% of clients responding to a satisfaction survey agreed that EyeMed's benefits were easy to use. Tools include a customer service line available 102 hours a week, an app and a website. A cost estimator tool will launch July 1.

EyeMed summarizes its advantages as:

- The vision care network that members want with a mix of independents, retail and onlineVision benefits
- Data driven solutions that have your members in mind
- An experience that makes vision benefits easy for both members and clients



[View the Presentation](#)

### LVBCH and Lehigh Healthcare Systems Engineering Host Symposium

The 6<sup>th</sup> Annual Healthcare Systems Engineering Symposium, "Creating Value in Healthcare through People, Processes and Technology" provided participants with examples of innovative applications to improve healthcare quality and reduce costs.

LVBCH co-hosted the May 21st event, which featured a panel discussion on value in health care. (Panelists pictured right.)

Also presenting were:

- Professor **Ana-Iulia Alexandrescu-Anselm**, Director, Lehigh University Healthcare Systems Engineering, who shared student success stories.
- **Allison Hess**, Vice President of Health Innovations, Geisinger, who discussed the "Fresh Food *Farmacy*," which uses food as medicine.
- **John Grimm**, Corporate Vice President, U.S. Research and Development, B. Braun Medical Inc., who described Solutions for Life, a program that helped solve the country's IV fluid shortage.



Left to right: Co-host **Ana-Iulia Alexandrescu-Anselm**, Lehigh University; moderator **Ann Baum**, Capital BlueCross; panelists **Thomas Sibson**, Bayada; **Jim Balshi, MD**, St. Luke's University Health Network; **Kay Ellen Werhun**, Lehigh Valley Health Network; **Tami Hutchinson**, Remedy Partners; **Jeff Stauffer**, Stauffer Glove and Safety; and co-host **Carl Seitz**, LVBCH

### United Concordia Provides Overview of Dental Landscape

Less dental problems among millennials is resulting in increased competition among dentists, said **Quinn Defurrena, DDS**, Chief Dental Officer, United Concordia. One in three dentists are not busy enough.



Left to right: **Carl Seitz**, LVBCH; **Dr. Quinn Defurrena**, **Linda Devlin** and **Donna Denby**, all of United Concordia

Dr. Defurrena said his grandfather was also a dentist and a large part of his practice was pulling teeth and fitting dentures. Today, however, people keep their teeth longer and require less dental work. Meanwhile, the cost of dental education has risen. About one third of dental students graduate with \$400,000 in student debt, which amounts to \$4,000 per month in loan payments. High student debt, increased competition, and the expense of establishing a private practice has fueled a trend toward larger, consolidated, multi-site practices, called Dental Service Organizations (DSOs), which employ dentists.

[View the Presentation](#)

## 39<sup>th</sup> Annual LVBCH Conference Draws Record Number of Attendees

### *Highlights Include Washington, D.C. Update and Executive Conversation*

Nearly 300 people attended LVBCH's 39<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference, "Emerging Trends in Healthcare: What's Next?" In addition to thought-provoking presentations, exhibits and networking, this year's event included the inaugural "Healthcare Executive Conversation." Local, regional, and national representatives of employers and healthcare service providers discussed several timely topics of interest to employers.

The discussion, moderated by **Ashley Russo**, President, ASR Media Productions & Executive Director and Host, The Peak TV, featured the following executives: (pictured with Russo below, seated left to right)

- **Chris Pruitt**, President & CEO, East Penn Manufacturing
- **John R. Morahan**, President, Penn State Health St. Joseph's
- **Brian Seiz**, President, Accredo, Express Scripts
- **Aji Abraham**, Senior Vice President, Capital BlueCross



The day began with conference favorite and Washington insider **Robert Laszewski**, President, Health Policy and Strategy Associates, who provided an update titled, "The Healthcare Political and Market Landscape." Price continues to drive increased costs and Americans are still paying more of the gross national product on health care than other countries, such as our European peers. For example, France, is much better at negotiating drug pricing. In fact, the Trump administration has proposed reference-based pricing using an international market basket for Part B drug payments.

"This is a huge leap," Laszewski said. "It's the concept of using the French negotiated price that's got the drug companies in a real tizzy. I would suggest the Frenchies are better capitalists that we are." Many people point to America's higher healthcare cost as justification for a single payer system, but it's not that simple. Canada adopted a single payer in 1965 and the United Kingdom in the early 1950s. Adopting a single payer system in U.S. now would be extremely difficult.

"If the U.S. had developed a single payer system in 1965, our healthcare system would have grown by the budgets available," Laszewski said. But unlike these countries, the healthcare industrial complex in America was allowed to flourish. The upside is we have better access to services, the downside is greater costs. To go to a single payer now you would have to figure out how to pay for it when the private sector pays more than twice as much for health care, subsidizing government programs.

"Medical for all is a great notion," he said. "But, if you take out private plans, it all starts to crumble." If you paid hospitals Medicare and Medicaid rates for all patients, you would shut down the hospitals. Even so, many Democrat presidential candidates have embraced single-payer health care. While some, like Bernie Sanders, want universal health care now, others support a more phased-in option.

"Trump is ready to brand Democrats as 'socialists' and so far, the Democrats are cooperating." Meanwhile, the Republicans have offered no detailed plans to replace Obamacare. Democrats are eager to make health care the successful election issue it was in 2018.

[View the Presentation](#)

## *Good Shepherd Rehabilitation Discusses Work-Related Injuries*

The economic burden of musculoskeletal disorders accounts for \$45-54 million each year due to compensation costs, lost wages and lost productivity, said **Yahira Acevedo-Santiago, MD**, Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation Physician, at LVBCH's 39<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference on May 2.

In her talk, "Work-Related Musculoskeletal Injuries," she said each year musculoskeletal disorders result in 70 million physician office visits in the U.S. and 130 million total health care encounters. Treatment includes exercise, medication, procedures, (such as injections), and surgery. Dr. Acevedo-Santiago stresses the importance of exercise. "They need to do the prescribed exercises every day to feel better."

**Frank Hyland**, Executive Director, Good Shepherd Rehabilitation, described the rehabilitative role of neuroplasticity – the mechanism by which the brain encodes experience and learns new behaviors. Good Shepherd has been successful in using a device called an exoskeleton, which harnesses the power of neuroplasticity, to enable patients with lower extremity paralysis to stand and walk.

[View the Presentation](#)

## *Geneia Provides Data Group Information*

Members of Geneia's executive team, **Fred Rahmanian**, chief analytics and technology officer, and **Shelley Riser**, vice president of consulting services and clinical innovation, reviewed the high-cost conditions among members in the Geneia – LVBCH Data Group: diseases of the musculoskeletal system & connective tissue; circulatory system; factors influencing health status; endocrine, nutritional & metabolic system and ear, nose, mouth & throat. Also, Riser discussed the prevalence and medical costs of the endocrine, nutritional, and metabolic system, including diabetes.

Rahmanian described Geneia Data Intelligence Lab's artificial intelligence (AI) initiatives that support employers' healthcare cost-containment initiatives. He highlighted the lab's work to identify, stratify, and predict high-cost claimants and conditions, including the creation of the models such as: the onset of type 2 diabetes and diabetes complications, which predicts diabetes-related complications

Interested employers are invited to the next strategic consulting services meeting on August 13 in Bethlehem.

[View the Presentation](#)

## *And the Lucky Raffle Winners Are...*

- **Capital BlueCross**, four tickets to Cirque Du Soleil Show, **Alli Ingram**, Habitat for Humanity
- **National Vision Administrators**, \$50 Visa gift card: **Dawn Wilson**, Buzzi-Unicem USA, Inc.
- **United Concordia Inc.**, Oral B electric toothbrush: **Sue Brown**, NEPA Manufacturers & Employers Association
- **ConsumerMedical**, Bose Soundlink headphones: **Toni Lee Febbo**, Lehigh University
- **Populytics/BenefIT Corporate Wellness**, Fitbit: **Cathy Martucci**, KidsPeace Corporation
- **Health Advocate**, stainless steel water bottle: **Heidi Boudargham**, Kessler Wolf Miller
- **Geisinger Health Plan**, summer fun basket: **Linda Stanton**, Populytics
- **Univest Insurance, Inc.**, gift basket with Bluetooth speaker: **Jill Weaver**, Diocese of Allentown
- **Cancer Support Community**, Whole Foods \$50 gift certificate: **Lisa Magrowski**, Reading School District
- **Integrated Behavioral Health**, Visa \$50 gift certificate: **Barbara Lenci**, KidsPeace Corporation
- **USI Insurance Services**, Roku streaming stick: **Gigi Seyfert**, KidsPeace Corporation
- **Highmark**, Savory Grille gift card: **Kathleen McNeill**, County of Northampton
- **BSI Corporate Benefits, LLC**, 4 Iron Pig Game Dugout suite tickets: **Christina Hostler**, Reeb Millwork
- **St. Luke's University Health Network**, summer fun basket with 3-month fitness membership: **Nicole Nix**, Crayola, LLC
- **Express Scripts**, duffle bag with goodies: **Lynn Sauerzopf**, PPL Corporation and **Adrienne Nagy**, Crayola, LLC
- **Equinox Agency, LLC**, Yeti Cooler Tote: **Connie Abercrombie**, Allentown Parking Authority
- **EyeMed**, Rayban sunglasses: **Kimberly Drey**, Lehigh University
- **Moravian College**, Rocketbook and Moravian Book Store gift card: **Kathy Sigafos**, Buzzi-Unicem USA, Inc.
- **DeSales University**, Goodie basket, **Isabel Rivera**, Monroe County
- **PinnacleCare**, \$50 gift card: **Susan Gella**, Buzzi-Unicem USA, Inc.

## Thank You LVBCH 2019 Annual Conference Sponsors

LVBCH would like to once again acknowledge and sincerely thank all of our event sponsors. Without their enthusiastic support, the event would not be possible.

### Premier Sponsors



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## Capital BlueCross

Capital BlueCross met with LVBCH employer groups in the Lehigh Valley on June 4, and in Reading on June 5. Here's a recap.

**2018 Utilization Review** – Across the Coalition, while plan spending increased by a little more than 1%, more than 98% of all claims were processed from in-network providers, with close to half of Coalition members being attributed to an accountable care provider. In addition, BlueCross is starting to see more members seek cost-effective care from urgent care centers and Virtual Care instead of the emergency room.

**Musculoskeletal Program** – An update on musculoskeletal procedures since delegating preauthorization services to TurningPoint Healthcare Solutions, LLC for joint replacement and spine surgeries was provided.

**HEDIS Measures** – The Coalition's most recent numbers reveal that members treated by a value-based provider have a higher percentage of cancer screenings, child and adolescent care, and diabetes management than those treated by a non-value-based provider.

**Virtual Care** – Virtual Care, a Capital BlueCross service that allows members to see doctors remotely from a phone/tablet, has added services, such as behavioral health therapists, psychiatrists, and nutrition counselors.

**GeoBlue** – As of July 1, employees can travel internationally with the same level of medical care wherever they go with GeoBlue Bundled Traveler. It offers more benefits than standard Blue Card Worldwide coverage, such as direct-to-provider payments and emergency medical evacuation. A fully insured product, it can be purchased as a group benefit or can be offered on a voluntary basis, and premiums would not impact your self-funded plan.

## Express Scripts 2019 Outcomes Symposium

LVBCH staff and members recently attended the symposium, held May 15-17 in Buena Vista, FL. A symposium highlight was a conversation between Express Scripts President **Tim Wentworth** and Cigna President and CEO **David Cordani** about their recent merger. Other presentations included policy discussions in preparation for the 2020 elections; Sarepta Therapeutics' look of the future of gene therapy treatments; and a keynote address by **Nicole Malachowski**, the first woman Thunderbird pilot.

More than 650 Express Scripts' healthcare partners gathered at Disney for the symposium with the common goal of simplifying healthcare. "The result was something incredible," said Jessica Morton, Express Scripts Account Executive. "We covered many important topics from personalizing clinical interventions, to mitigating market shifts for payers, to putting innovation to work for patients and providers."

## BlueCross BlueShield Elite Client Conference

Participants received a heightened understanding of the changing and emerging market dynamics that drive effective healthcare solutions. Held in April in Orlando, FL, the theme of the conference was "Empowering You with Sustainable Healthcare."

The conference was hosted for BlueCross Blue Shield National Account partners to discuss:

- Strategic insights from other industry executives
- Successful healthcare strategies peer organizations are implementing
- BlueCross BlueShield innovations underway at Blue Plans across the country that companies and their employees will benefit from.

The conference also allowed groups the opportunity to share ideas and thoughts with other national accounts across the country. They were provided a review of the marketplace dynamics that drive and affect healthcare solutions, such as improving health care in every community, tailoring network solutions, providing a more personalized member experience, and using purposeful innovation to improve outcomes.



LVBCH continues to develop its relationship with the Leapfrog Group, serving as a Regional Leader. In this role, LVBCH invites and encourages hospitals across Pennsylvania to complete the annual [Hospital Survey](#) that assesses hospital safety, quality, and efficiency based on national performance measures.

## Maternity Care: Hospitals Fail to Deliver

The Leapfrog 2019 Maternity Care Report, released in May, states that only one in five U.S. hospitals fully meets payer standards for maternity care. The report is based on data from more than 2000 hospitals that voluntarily provided data related to three areas of maternity care: cesarean sections, early elective delivery, and episiotomy rates.



The main findings among responding hospitals in the past year compared to when the Leapfrog first began collecting data and publicly reporting on these metrics are:

- Overall, the average rate of early elective deliveries has steadily decreased from 1.6% in 2017 to 1.5% in 2018, its lowest rate ever and a significant decrease from 4.6% in 2013. However, it is still well under Leapfrog's target for hospitals of 5%.
- Episiotomy rates have declined from 7.8% in 2017 to 6.9% in 2018, their lowest rate since a 17% starting point in 2010 though still above Leapfrog's target for hospitals of 5%.
- The average rate of NTSV cesarean births has remained virtually stagnant since being at 26.4% in 2015, most recently hovering at 26.3% in 2017 to 26.1% in 2018. This is above Leapfrog's target for hospitals of 23.9%.

[Read the Report](#)



## Area Hospitals Make the Grade

Many area hospitals were among the 44 Pennsylvania hospitals this spring that received an "A" safety grade from the Leapfrog Group, a national watchdog organization of employers and other purchasers focused on health care safety and quality. They are:

- Geisinger Bloomsburg Hospital
- Geisinger Lewistown Hospital
- Geisinger Wyoming Valley Medical Center
- Grand View Hospital (Sellersville)
- Lehigh Valley Hospital – Cedar Crest
- Lehigh Valley Hospital – Hazleton
- Lehigh Valley Hospital – Muhlenberg
- Lehigh Valley Hospital - Pocono
- Reading Hospital
- St. Luke's Hospital – Anderson
- St. Luke's Hospital – Miners Campus
- St. Luke's Monroe Campus
- St. Luke's University Hospital – Bethlehem

If every hospital had the performance of "A" rated hospitals an estimated 50,000 lives could be saved. Overall, 160,000 lives are lost each year due to avoidable medical errors.

"LVBCH is happy to support Leapfrog's efforts to improve hospital safety," said LVBCH President Carl Seitz. "We congratulate the A-graded hospitals and commend all hospitals that are steadily improving quality."

[Read the Report](#)



LVBCH partners with the National Alliance of Healthcare Purchaser Coalitions to drive innovation, health, and value through the collective action of public and private purchasers. Together, both organizations seek to accelerate the nation's progress toward safe, efficient, high-quality healthcare and the improved status of the American population.

## Information on Managing Cancer Treatment Costs



The cancer mortality rate has dropped by 24% since the early 2000s. In fact, today some types of cancer can be managed like a chronic condition.

Meanwhile, however, the cost of treatment has skyrocketed. New drugs can cost as much as \$400,000 per year.

*Click on the infographic to the left for more information.*

## Migraines Cost Employers \$12 Billion a Year



Migraine headaches afflict more than 40 million Americans – or one of every 10 – making it the fifth most disabling illness in the United States. Migraines cost employers significantly in terms of absenteeism, presenteeism, and health care spending. This amounts to 113 million missed workdays at a cost of \$12 billion.

*Click on the clinical brief to the left for more information.*

## LVBCH Staff Attend Leadership Summit

The LVBCH staff attended the National Alliance of Healthcare Purchaser Coalition's Annual Leadership Summit in Pittsburgh from June 24-26. The summit provided a unique platform to learn from the nation's leading experts and stakeholders.

Topics included:

- **Peak Health & Performance** – Leading organizations are moving beyond population health to help their employees be their best.
- **Benefits & Care Redesign** – Program designs are evolving to better align, support, and drive innovation and performance in care delivery.
- **Patient-centered Value** – Quality, safety, and value encompass patient-centered outcomes and personalized care and support.

## Health Policy in Transit A Purchaser's Viewpoint



Surprise Billing Legislation



"Single Payer Option" Bills



Drug Transparency Act

*Click on the picture above for more information.*

## Study: Private Health Plans Pay Nearly 2½ Times More than Medicare

The National Hospital Price Transparency study, released in May, found the prices paid to hospitals for privately insured patients averaged 241% of what Medicare would have paid, with wide variation in prices among states and hospitals within states. [This extensive study](#), covering 25 states and almost 1,600 hospitals, was conducted by RAND Corporation in collaboration with the Employer's Forum of Indiana and a number of other national business coalitions.

These studies are the first of their kind, being a purchaser-led initiative that uses claims data to compare hospital prices publicly. Core study goals are:

- To enable employers to be better-informed shoppers for health plans and provider networks
- To hold hospitals, hospital systems, and health plans accountable for the prices they have negotiated
- To report hospital prices relative to a Medicare benchmark

"Health care providers and patients have made significant progress in reducing utilization, but these gains have been negated by the escalation of the price of services," said LVBCH President Carl Seitz. "Until the payers of private health plans – namely employers and their employees through deductibles and co-pays – demand price reductions, costs will continue to take a bigger chunk out of the company's bottom line and the employee's budget. Studies like these are a huge step forward in understanding just how much private plans bear the burden of subsidizing our country's health care system."

Few Pennsylvania employers participated in the recent study and a similar conducted earlier and released in 2017. However, a third study (Rand 3.0), expected to begin in early 2020, will strive to blanket the nation with hospitals relevant to participating employers and other purchasers. In collaboration with the National Alliance of Health of Healthcare Purchaser Coalitions and the Employers' Forum of Indiana, LVBCH will seek to recruit additional member employers to participate.

[Frequently Asked Questions](#)

[Enroll in the Next Study](#)

## PHC4: Drug Withdrawal in Newborns Increases 1,000% in 16 Years

The Pennsylvania Health Care Cost Containment Council (PHC4) released a new research brief recently showing that the rate of newborns suffering from drug withdrawal increased more than 1,000% between fiscal years 2000-2001 and 2016-2017. Referred to as Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome (or NAS), this array of problems develops shortly after birth in newborns who were exposed to addictive drugs, most often opioids, while in the mother's womb. Withdrawal signs develop because these newborns are no longer exposed to the drug for which they have become physically dependent.



Specifically, PHC4's research found that the rate of hospital stays for newborns with NAS increased from 1.2 per 1,000 newborn hospitalizations to 15.0. In FY 2017, there were 1,912 NAS-related newborn stays in Pennsylvania. NAS was diagnosed in 58% of the newborn stays involving maternal substance use that year.

Newborns with NAS typically required more days in the hospital and were much more likely to suffer from complications, such as low birth weight, prematurity, difficulty feeding, and respiratory distress. The average hospital stay for newborns with NAS was 17.1 days compared to 3.5 days for all other newborn stays.

[Read the Report](#)

## Express Scripts Release 2018 Drug Trend Report

In 2018, Express Scripts achieved a 0.4% trend – the lowest increase in drug spending for commercial plans in 25 years. In the simplest terms, unit cost trend is defined as the rate of change in costs due to inflation, discounts, and drug mix. Utilization and cost are determined on a per-member-per-year (PMPY) basis.

Also, in 2018, Express Scripts' clinical solutions saved \$45 billion with patients paying an average of \$11.55 per 30-day prescription, 6 cents more than in 2017.

- Other statistics to note:
  - 50% of Express Scripts clients saw a negative drug trend
  - -0.3%: Negative trend for Express Scripts Medicare clients in 2018
  - -0.4%: Unit cost for clients declined 0.4%, compared to a 0.8% increase in 2017

[Click here to read the report](#)



## BeneFIT Corporate Wellness Offers Healthy Approach to Weight



Despite a \$72 billion weight loss industry in the US, more than 70% of adults over age 20 are overweight or obese, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. A new program, developed by BeneFIT Corporate Wellness, shifts the perspective and emphasizes self-awareness.

“We don’t even talk about food until the fourth session,” says BeneFIT Health Coach **Tiffany Ritter**, RD, LDN. The program, “*Worth the Weight: Thinking beyond Numbers on a Scale*,” focuses on addressing concepts like motivation, self-compassion, and problem-solving. “Our goal is to help participants discover autonomy and build self-efficacy because these skills form the foundation of behavior change.”

The onsite program includes eight, weekly sessions. In its initial phase, it has achieved 100% participant satisfaction and 95% of participants reduced or maintained their current weight. Contact Eileen Fallis at 610-969-0044 or visit <https://www.populytics.com/benefit/weight-management/> for more information.

## United Concordia Offers Hard Facts on Soft Drinks

Soda doesn’t seem like such a sweet treat once you know the facts. When you sip a sugary drink, the bacteria in your mouth use the sugar to produce acid. The acids dissolve the enamel on your teeth, which can open the door to tooth decay. To prevent decay:

- **Limit the time sugar is in your mouth.** Frequent sipping keeps sugars and acids in your mouth longer, giving bacteria more opportunity to cause cavities.
- **Limit how many soft drinks you consume.** The less added sugar in your diet, the better.
- **Drink and rinse with water!** According to the American Dental Association, sipping water— especially if it’s fluoridated – cleans the mouth and neutralizes acids.
- **Avoid diet soda.** Sugar-free sodas contain high levels of acid that can damage your teeth.



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Our affiliation with these national organizations is a value-added benefit for our members.

