DOWNEAST DIGITAL

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Synopsis for Events

Innovating with large employers

Speakers

- Orriel Richardson, JPMC
- Jason Weshler, Siemens Healthineers
- Sherri Nash, AT&T Healthcare
- Manwell Bynum, Atrium Health
- Margaret Lozovatsky
- Kari Kalgren, Premier Inc

Summary

The session titled "Innovating with Large Employers" at the 2025 Downeast Digital Health Equity Innovation Forum emphasized the critical role large employers play in advancing health equity through employer-sponsored insurance. Covering over 180 million Americans, these employers have significant influence over healthcare spending and outcomes. The session highlighted the strategic use of data and analytics to inform decision-making and improve health outcomes, despite challenges such as data silos and a lack of sophisticated analytics capabilities. Participants discussed the importance of integrating social determinants of health and leveraging digital health solutions to enhance healthcare delivery. The session also explored the potential for large employers to drive innovation by adopting value-based care models and focusing on preventive and primary care. However, challenges such as rising healthcare costs, legal and regulatory barriers, and the need for collaboration with healthcare providers were also noted. The session concluded with a call for more robust partnerships and open-source learning to overcome these challenges and drive meaningful change in health equity.

Key Insights

- Employers face significant challenges in utilizing data effectively to enhance their health benefits offerings. Despite having access to a wealth of financial data, many employers lack the necessary infrastructure and expertise to analyze and leverage this information for strategic decision-making. This is particularly evident in the realm of employer-sponsored insurance, which covers over 180 million Americans and accounts for $1 trillion in healthcare spending annually. The disparity in data utilization capabilities between small and large employers is stark; smaller businesses often lack the sophisticated analytics teams that larger companies possess, which hinders their ability to refine benefits and manage costs effectively.
- The impact of care denial on the workforce is a critical issue that employers must address to enhance employee productivity and satisfaction. As healthcare costs continue to rise, employers are increasingly focused on managing these expenses while ensuring that their employees receive necessary care. However, denial of care, often due to discrepancies between payer policies and the standard of care recommended by physicians, poses significant challenges. These denials not only affect the health outcomes of employees but also their work-life balance, as many are forced to seek care outside of work hours, leading to increased absenteeism and decreased productivity.
- Employers play a pivotal role in health innovation, specifically through their influence on employer-sponsored insurance. Despite this significant impact, health outcomes in the U.S. lag behind other high-income countries, with poor metrics in life expectancy, maternal and infant mortality, and treatable condition death rates. Employers, especially large ones, have the potential to drive health innovation by leveraging their data and resources to improve health outcomes and manage costs.

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Key Insights – Continued

- Financial incentives for health programs emerged as a pivotal theme in the strategic discussions, highlighting their potential to drive significant improvements in health outcomes and cost management for employer-sponsored insurance. Employers are increasingly recognizing the unsustainable nature of rising healthcare costs and are exploring financial incentives as a strategic tool to enhance preventive and primary care.

Best Practices

- Employers should enhance data accessibility by integrating comprehensive data analytics systems that bridge HR and healthcare data, enabling a holistic view of employee health and wellness. This integration should focus on leveraging existing data to identify health trends, disparities, and opportunities for targeted interventions. Employers must invest in data scientists and analytics teams capable of interpreting complex datasets to inform strategic decisions.
- Promoting preventive and primary care should be a top priority for employers as it directly impacts the health and productivity of their workforce. Employers are increasingly recognizing the importance of preventive and primary care as a strategic approach to manage healthcare costs and improve employee well-being. By investing in preventive measures, employers can address health issues at an early stage, reducing the need for more expensive treatments later and improving health equity.
- Telehealth presents a significant opportunity to reduce healthcare disparities by enhancing access to care, particularly for underserved populations. Employers, who cover a substantial portion of the American workforce, can play a pivotal role in this transformation. By integrating telehealth solutions into their healthcare offerings, employers can provide their employees with more flexible and immediate access to healthcare services, which is crucial for those in remote or underserved areas.

Conclusion

The strategy session concluded with a consensus on the critical role large employers play in shaping the future of healthcare through their influence on employer-sponsored insurance. It was acknowledged that while there are significant opportunities for innovation and improvement in health outcomes, these are contingent upon employers' ability to effectively utilize data and collaborate with healthcare providers. The session highlighted the need for a strategic shift towards value-based care models and the importance of addressing health disparities through targeted interventions and data-driven decision-making. Participants agreed that fostering open-source learning and collaboration across employer groups is essential to overcoming the challenges of cost management and achieving health equity. The session underscored the importance of preventive care and the potential of digital health solutions to transform the healthcare landscape for employer-sponsored insurance beneficiaries.

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Top Topics

- Employer-sponsored insurance
- Health equity
- Data analytics
- Value-based care
- Preventive care
- Healthcare costs
- Digital health solutions
- ERISA challenges
- Health disparities
- Collaboration strategies

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