

# THE PUISE W



**AUGUST 2024** 

Message from our CEO & President Megan Shaw

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Dear Friends and Fellow Pittsburgh Life Sciences Enthusiasts -

When we launched PLSA in April our first goal was to take a fresh and unbiased look at the region's strengths and opportunities. Having this understanding is foundational to determining where and how to focus in growing the region's life sciences industry.

We spent the past quarter working with **TEConomy** Partners — a global leader in research, analysis, and strategy for innovation-driven economic development — crunching data, convening subject matter experts, and understanding our ecosystem's growing edge. We set out to learn:

- What are the areas where we truly excel?
- What are the gaps we have to fill to jump from emerging cluster to global leader?
- What critical catalysts can we add that will create an impressive growth reaction?

We'll be sharing the full report later this fall, but I wanted to share a few highlights that have emerged.

#### **Understanding Our Strengths**

While many of us are aware of our region's clinical strengths, TEConomy's work has highlighted how the profound breadth and depth of healthcare R&D truly differentiates the region. Supported by two leading health systems and our prominent R1 universities, local researchers have published over 100,000 articles since 2018. We boast preeminent thought leaders in multiple clinical areas as well as at the intersection where supercomputing and AI transform healthcare.

Most regions would hope to have one such area where they excel; Pittsburgh has dozens. This expertise translates into first class care, fundamental innovations in human healthcare, and a national network of clinical leaders and department chairs who were shaped by their experience in the region.



Source: TEConomy analysis of data from the Clarivate Analytics' Web of Science publications analysis database

#### Where We Can Grow

As many of you shared, and as we saw in the data, translating this exceptional strength in research and early-stage discovery into successful commercial companies has not happened at the rate we would hope. The need for more early-stage capital and experienced managerial talent, and a desire for more collaboration within and across industry, academia, and the broader ecosystem are themes that emerged throughout the process. These are some of the key areas PLSA will work with partners across the region and state to address.

We are already seeing improvements. More leaders are relocating to the region and expanded capital from the coasts is finding its way to Pittsburgh. With growth companies in AI like **Abridge** lighting the scene on fire, and publicly traded companies like **Krystal Biotech** rapidly growing their market capitalization, the word is quickly spreading about investment opportunities in the region.

I am extremely grateful for the members of the **Strategic Advisory Committee** who are guiding this work and the dozens of leaders from industry, academia, and the broader ecosystem who generously participated in focus groups. Stay tuned for the full report!

#### **Growing the PLSA Team**

To move this work forward and pull the right levers, we needed to add talent, experience, and perspective, while remaining lean and nimble. I am ecstatic with the talent we recruited, who bring direct experience from biotech startups to major health systems to building a highly-successful regional life sciences organization. Read more about this dynamite group of doers and click to their LinkedIn profiles in the "Welcome" section below.

#### **Looking Ahead**

We look forward to sharing the full insights and recommendations from TEConomy Partners with all of you later this fall.

Thank you for reading and sharing our newsletter. Your engagement helps translate the incredible human, clinical, and technical assets in the region into a world-class hub of human health innovation.

Megan Shaw, President & CEO Pittsburgh Life Sciences Alliance

### **Welcome To Our New Team Members**



Austin Price External Affairs Advisor



Jenn Rick Community Manager



Bre Bishop Project Assistant



David Johnson
Executive Advisor

We are pleased to share that our PLSA team expanded this summer, welcoming four new members dedicated to moving our mission forward.

Austin Price, external affairs advisor, also serves as the director of stakeholder engagement and impact, social determinants of health at Highmark Health. His innate passion for problem-solving and communicating fuels excellent life sciences storytelling in our region.

Jenn Rick, community manager, formerly the managing director of PTC Life Sciences Network, brings enthusiasm to the role, ready to connect the different pieces of our life sciences sphere and geographic location with a shared vision and goals.

**Bre Bishop**, project assistant, formerly interned with LifeX and works as a project manager at the University of Pittsburgh and is eager to contribute to the life sciences world in a variety of ways.

**David Johnson**, executive advisor, is the founder and former CEO of BioCrossroads and is channeling his wide-ranging expertise into creative solutions for PLSA.

### **Recent Wins**

# Abridge collaborates with Mayo Clinic and Epic to develop integrated Al documentation solution for nurses

The generative AI ambient documentation workflow will put cutting-edge solutions directly in the hands of nurses.

# KaliVir Immunotherapeutics announced FDA clearance of investigational new drug for oncolytic immunotherapy

The Phase 1/1b study will evaluate the safety profile and efficacy of VET3-TGI when administered

through intravenous infusion or intratumoral injection in patients with advanced, incurable solid tumors.

#### BlueSphere Bio to partner with NMDP BioTherapies<sup>™</sup>

Through this partnership, BlueSphere will treat patients with acute myeloid and lympocytic leukemia and myeloid dysplastic syndrome.

# Walgreens launches gene and cell services as part of newly integrated specialty pharmacy businesses

The offering includes a dedicated 18,000-square-foot center in Pittsburgh, with services and capabilities including innovative solutions for managing the supply chain as well as clinical and social needs management.

# AlphaLab Health secured \$10M grant to endow life sciences startup fund

The funds from an anonymous donor will go toward creating a Health Revolving Investment Fund for a permanent, self-sustaining source of revenue that can support startups in the area.

If you're a startup focused on life sciences and looking to accelerate your growth, don't miss the opportunity to apply to AlphaLab Health's fifth cohort! You can find more information at: alphalabhealth.org.



## **Startup Spotlight**

### **KaliVir Immunotherapeutics**

- Biopharmaceutical company
- Headquartered in Pittsburgh, PA
- Founded in 2019
- 50 employees
- 43 Pittsburgh-based employees



**KaliVir Immunotherapeutics** is a biopharmaceutical company founded in 2019, dedicated to developing cutting-edge, multi-mechanistic, systemically deliverable oncolytic virus immunotherapies. The team designed a new class of oncolytic virus immunotherapies that combine the natural ability of viruses to kill cancer cells with novel mechanisms to stimulate anti-tumor immunity, modify tumor microenvironment, and maximize targeted killing across all tumor types. Founder and current chief scientific officer Steve

Thorn was in a faculty position at the University of Pittsburgh when he took a huge leap of faith based on his confidence in the paradigm-shifting immunotherapy approach to treating cancer that works to unleash the body's immune system against the disease.

KaliVir's mission is to provide patients with the next generation of safe and potent cancer medicine in the form of systemically deliverable oncolytic viruses.

In July, the company announced that the FDA cleared the Investigational New Drug (IND) application for its VET3-TGI program, moving KaliVir closer to that goal. VET3-TGI is a novel oncolytic immunotherapy which, in nonclinical studies, showed that it can specifically target and kill tumor cells directly while stimulating anti-cancer immunity by expressing its therapeutic payload consisting of the transgenes for interleukin-12 and a TGFbeta inhibitor.

## **Innovation Today**

NIH Awards \$3.15M to Fund Operation of Third-Generation Anton Supercomputer in Pittsburgh



This exciting development for the Pittsburgh Supercomputing Center, a collaborative effort by Carnegie Mellon University and the University of Pittsburgh, is indicative of the increase in data-driven healthcare and personalized medicine innovations happening in our own backyard.

### **Tell Us What You Think**



Which life sciences subsector will see the most transformation in 2025?

**Therapeutics** 

**Digital Health/IT** 

**Medical Devices** 

## **Employer Spotlight**

### **ZOLL**

- Global medical device company
- Pittsburgh-based Cardiac
   Management Solutions division
   founded in 1986 as Lifecor; acquired
   by ZOLL in 2006
- 2,700 worldwide Cardiac
   Management Solutions employees
   Global employees
- 1,400 Pittsburgh-based Cardiac Management Solutions employees



**ZOLL's** medical devices, software, and related services are used worldwide to diagnose and treat patients suffering from serious cardiopulmonary and respiratory conditions. This comprehensive set of technologies helps clinicians, EMS and fire professionals, and lay rescuers improve patient outcomes in critical cardiopulmonary conditions.

The ZOLL Cardiac Management Solutions division offers a portfolio of novel technologies designed to deliver better insights and better outcomes in cardiac patient care. Solutions include the LifeVest, the world's first wearable cardioverter defibrillator (WCD) for patients at risk of sudden cardiac death; Heart

Failure Management System (HFMS); and WatchPAT® ONE Home Sleep Apnea Test.

On any given day, clinicians utilize these ZOLL products for tens of thousands of patients around the world, helping ensure cardiac patients get the therapies they need, so they can get back to living their lives. Approximately three patients are saved by the LifeVest WCD each day, and more than 1 million patients have worn ZOLL Cardiac Management Solutions devices.

In 1986, Dr. Stephen Heilman founded the Lifecor Corporation in Pittsburgh to develop LifeVest, which was approved by the FDA in 2001. In 2006, the Cardiac Management Solutions business became a part of ZOLL Medical Corporation, which was acquired by Asahi Kasei in 2012. The division is still headquartered in Pittsburgh.

ZOLL currently has over 20 job openings listed in Pittsburgh! Is one right for you?

### **Did You Know?**

The June 2024 CBRE report listed Pittsburgh as the #12 market for medtech talent and the #22 market for biopharma R&D. The report also noted Pittsburgh's high number of bioinformatics and computational biology PhDs. We will continue to see upward growth in the region when we prioritize these robust industries with the necessary support and passion.



# Thank You To Our Industry Advisory Council Members











biohaven











If you are interested in joining our Industry Advisory Council, please reach out to Megan at mshaw@pittsburghlifesci.org.



The best way to stay on top of news and updates from PLSA, as well as the organizations in our ecosystem, is by following us on LinkedIn. Don't miss out!



We are always looking for your input! If you have suggestions for newsletter content or spotlights, please contact kate@ atozcommunications.com.

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