

INSIGHTS INTO

Deb Rice-Johnson is an innovative health insurance leader, driven by a passion for reinventing health care experiences and pioneering provider relationships designed to keep care close to home and change antiquated reimbursement methods. Through diverse and inventive relationships ranging from joint ventures to equity interest partnerships, she has spearheaded affiliations and clinical alliances with Penn State Health, Lehigh Valley Health, Geisinger Health System and many regionally-based health care providers.

As president of Highmark Inc., she is responsible for providing senior leadership and strategic direction for the company's health insurance business, serving 5.3 million customers and managing more than \$15 billion in revenue. Additionally, she has accountability for product development, provider networks and reimbursement, clinical services, sales and operations. Ms. Rice-Johnson is also responsible for Highmark's insurance-based subsidiaries: United Concordia Dental, the sixth largest dental plan nationally that serves the largest voluntary dental program in the world with TRICARE, and HM Insurance Group, a national carrier with annual revenues of more than \$1 billion.



*Deb Rice-Johnson
President, Highmark Inc.*



competitiveness. That translates to better care, lower cost and greater access for our members.

Q : Highmark recently announced an agreement to affiliate with HealthNow New York Inc., a fellow Blue Cross Blue Shield health insurance plan covering western and northeastern New York. Why is this affiliation a good fit for Highmark?

This affiliation is a major win for more than 600,000 HealthNow members, local employers and New York residents who have come to rely on HealthNow over its 80-plus-year history. In a drastically changing health care landscape, the Highmark-HealthNow affiliation links two mission-driven organizations that believe in the power of community-based care, and delivers Highmark's innovative insurance products and technological capabilities to new customers.

Like HealthNow, Highmark is committed to forging strong partnerships with community-based clinicians. We believe that all health care is local, and that members are best

served when they can access care close to where they work and live. We at Highmark combine our capabilities with the expertise of our clinical partners to better engage members, design new care pathways and link costs to health outcomes. We have a proven track record of working with health systems and physician practices to transform their approach to care, provide them with the tools and resources to make the best decisions possible, and reward them for delivering better health outcomes.

We also have a proven track record of completing affiliations that maintain local identity and decision-making, while also unlocking new resources for local customers, employers, employees and the community at large.

Highmark was formed through the consolidation of Blue Cross of Western Pennsylvania and Pennsylvania Blue Shield. Over the past two decades, we have affiliated with statewide Blue Cross Blue Shield plans in West Virginia and Delaware, and we merged with Blue Cross of Northeastern Pennsylvania. In each of these agreements, we delivered upon its promise of offering new benefits and resources while maintaining the affiliate's strong historical presence. Local leaders who know their communities best play key roles in governance and day-to-day operations. We will honor that promise in our agreement with HealthNow, too.

Q : In addition to those affiliations, what are some other ways that Highmark has grown while keeping a focus on local care?

To meet our customers' needs, we have developed a continuum of provider partnerships, clinical joint ventures, and integrations that create community-based networks of primary and specialty care.

In western Pennsylvania, we made a more than \$1 billion investment in Allegheny Health Network (AHN) to create access points and preserve choice. We're focused on connecting care and health insurance coverage in remarkable ways. Through the Highmark-AHN partnership, we have created an incubator of sorts that we use to test new value-based models for both health care delivery and reimbursement. We test these models and have an opportunity to adjust before we roll them out more broadly in the marketplace with other anchor partners.

For example, we launched an Affordable Care Act (ACA) insurance product last year called Together Blue. This is a lower-cost ACA plan in the Pittsburgh and Erie markets that offers members access to high-quality, convenient primary and specialty care through AHN.

In central Pennsylvania, we're partnering with Penn State Health for a more than \$1 billion joint investment to create a community-based care network. Over the

Q : In addition to being the president of Highmark Inc., you are the organization's chief growth officer. What does that role entail?

As chief growth officer, I see my role as pursuing a range of strategic partnerships, affiliations and acquisitions that will allow us to bring our Living Health model to life, and export that model to more regions and more members. Our Living Health model builds a better system for our customers and clinicians through innovative solutions and partnerships to deliver them.

Q : Why is Highmark looking to grow right now?

Growth is important to our continued success for a few different reasons. First, growth helps us maintain our marketplace position as a national leader among Blue Cross Blue Shield plans. We want to attract like-minded partners, and emerge as a positive disruptor among Blues that can deliver at scale in the market.

Second, growth strengthens our ability to shape care locally, and increase the number of lives cared for by our strategic provider partners. Third, our national competitors are growing and diversifying as well. Traditional competitors are getting bigger by diversifying their business lines, and newer competitors are entering the field looking to disrupt different parts of the value chain. Scale and diversification are how we thrive in this changing environment.

Strategic partnerships and affiliations will allow us to invest in new capabilities for our Living Health model, and improve our cost

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past two years, we have made significant progress. Together, we are creating new healthcare access points, including through new local hospitals and clinics in the communities we serve. We have created a Clinically Integrated Network of community physicians to share best practices, develop standards of primary care, and ultimately improve chronic disease prevention and management. We have also partnered with employers to develop health insurance solutions that offer robust benefits and lower costs through Penn State Health, and Highmark has invested \$25 million in the acclaimed Penn State Health Cancer Institute.

In partnership with Lehigh Valley Health Network, we launched a health insurance product that has improved health outcomes and lowered costs. Our claims data shows that members in that plan are more likely to get preventive services, such as immunizations and physical exams. This keeps them healthier, and has resulted in fewer emergency department visits, fewer surgical procedures, and a reduction in medical and prescription costs.

We have partnered with Geisinger on a clinical joint venture to improve access to care for residents of northcentral Pennsylvania. Since we announced the JV, Geisinger and Highmark have committed more than \$100 million to improve existing clinical facilities, develop new ones, and expand services to improve access to care in the region. And, earlier this year, we announced a collaboration with WellSpan Health in central Pennsylvania to improve care, better engage clinicians and lower costs.

Q: 2020 has presented many challenges. How is Highmark helping its customers and local communities through the COVID-19 pandemic?

We know that local businesses are ramping back up while continuing to prioritize the health and safety of their employees and customers. That's why we have launched a variety of return-to-work initiatives while also supporting broader recovery efforts in the communities that we serve.

Highmark is partnering with Pittsburgh-based, minority and woman-owned small businesses to distribute and manufacture more than one million face coverings. We will distribute these face coverings to at-risk and vulnerable Highmark members, community organizations in need, health care professionals, and employer groups across Pennsylvania, West Virginia and Delaware. Employer groups will receive the masks as part of a back-to-work toolkit, which encourages CDC-recommended practices to safely reopen businesses.

We recognize the critical importance of supporting small and diverse businesses that are reflective of the members we serve. We are proud to partner with locally-owned

businesses to further protect the health of communities and promote economic recovery.

To further support safe return-to-work initiatives, Highmark and AHN have come together to launch a Corporate Physician Consultant (CPC) service. The CPC is a consultative service that provides a personal touch to a virtual connection between Highmark group customers and AHN clinicians, who serve as trusted advisors on a variety of return-to-workplace issues. The CPC offers current, factual evidence-based information on COVID-19 so that employers can shape sound practices and policies for their respective workplaces.

“This crisis has been a gut-check moment. I’ve never been more proud of our company, and the way that our community has come together.”

Schools are also developing plans to reopen, balancing the need to create a positive learning environment with the need to keep students, faculty and other staff members safe. To support their efforts, we are distributing back-to-school toolkits that include items like face shields for teachers, adjustable masks for students, sanitizers and disinfectants, and visuals that promote safe practices. AHN clinicians are also collaborating with schools, helping them create plans related to social distancing, personal protective equipment, hand sanitation and surface cleaning, transportation, sports, testing, contact tracing and mental health, among other topics.

It's crucial that our members continue to have safe and simple access to care— not just for COVID-19-related matters, but also for preventing and managing other physical

and behavioral health conditions. That's why we are removing financial burdens for our members and harnessing technology to promote safety and care continuity.

In early March, as the virus began to spread, Highmark announced the decision to cover COVID-19 testing, both in-network and out-of-network. This allowed our members to get tested for the virus (when ordered by a clinician) with no out-of-pocket costs so that members did not face any barriers in getting tested for the virus. Highmark members who require in-network, inpatient hospital care for COVID-19 will not incur any deductibles, co-insurance and co-pays through September 30.

To augment these efforts, we collaborated with the CDC Foundation and Microsoft to develop and launch the COVID-19 Symptom Checker Healthbot. All consumers can use the Healthbot to check their symptoms, which will then provide guidance on seeking appropriate medical care when necessary during the COVID-19 pandemic.

In March, Highmark also expanded coverage for telehealth services to all members, including customers who previously did not have telehealth coverage. We have waived cost-sharing for fully insured and most self-funded clients on all covered telehealth services from contracted vendors and providers through September 30. Telehealth has served as a vital care link for our members, who are using technology not only for primary care but also to see dietitians, physical therapists and mental health professionals, among other specialties.

While helping businesses get back to work safely and protecting our members, we are also proud to support broader community relief efforts. Highmark has provided \$2 million to address food insecurity, financial stability and safety net health care across Pennsylvania, West Virginia and Delaware. Through our partnership with AHN in western Pennsylvania and health systems in other communities, Highmark has actively supported COVID-19 testing, with a focus on underserved communities through mobile units.

Through our “Summer Safely” campaign, we are engaging and educating local communities on ways to enjoy the season while continuing to protect their health, and that of their loved ones and neighbors. And, to express our gratitude to EMS professionals who are on the frontlines of the COVID-19 pandemic, Highmark donated nearly 40,000 cloth face coverings across Pennsylvania, West Virginia and Delaware during National EMS Week in May. These coverings help to lessen the spread of coronavirus, while also preserving valuable personal protective equipment for direct patient care.

This crisis has been a gut-check moment. I've never been more proud of our company, and the way that our community has come together.