



Mitigating implementation risks and enhancing care:

The Point32Health and Freespira partnership

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Introduction

Point32Health, the parent organization of Harvard Pilgrim Health Care and Tufts Health Plan, serves 2 million members across New England, delivering comprehensive and holistic healthcare. Point32Health is distinguished from other health plans not only by its pioneering use of advanced technology to enhance patient care and improve health outcomes, but also by its unwavering commitment to innovation.

In 2022, Point32Health introduced an annual Innovation Challenge. The aim of the Challenge was to “bring together some of the brightest minds from across the country; all focused on improving the health and wellness of our members and those in the broader community.” Given the vast number of solutions on the market, Point32Health uses this program to identify the most promising new treatments to address its members’ needs, prioritizing those solutions that have a positive impact on health equity and the social determinants of health.

The Innovation Challenge creates an opportunity to facilitate the discovery and implementation of innovative solutions to a broad range of healthcare issues.



The challenges

Introducing new treatment modalities to health plan members poses various challenges that go beyond achieving positive clinical outcomes. The broader concerns include optimizing member outreach and engagement, seamlessly integrating into existing organizational workflows, developing distribution logistics, measuring patient and provider satisfaction, and containing costs as well as mitigating financial risks. These challenges require effective, creative, and reliable solutions poised for integration to ensure the successful launch and adoption of the new treatment.

The application process for the Innovation Challenge is rigorous and comprehensive, designed to thoroughly evaluate the potential impact of each solution. Over the past two years, the Challenge received approximately 125 applications. Each year, eight semi-finalists are selected, and from these, three finalists are chosen to present their solutions in a Shark Tank-style format to Point32Health's senior executives, including the Vice President of Clinical Innovation and the Chief Medical Officer.



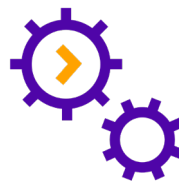
The challenges

The Point32Health criteria for selecting finalists focus on several essential qualities:



Innovation

The solution must offer a novel approach that significantly improves or replaces current standard practices.



Effectiveness

It should demonstrate the potential for outcomes that are equal to or better than existing treatments.



Feasibility

The company must demonstrate robust capability to implement and deliver the solution reliably.



Impact on health equity

Solutions that can help reduce health disparities by increasing access to a broader population are particularly valued.



Mental and behavioral health parity

Effective behavioral health therapeutics and interventions are highly sought after and regarded.



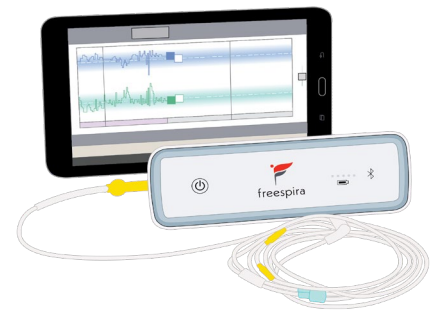
Freespira has health economic evidence demonstrating the cost-effectiveness and potential cost savings associated with its treatment compared to the standard of care. By highlighting reductions in healthcare utilization such as emergency department visits and medication use, Freespira aligned its value proposition with health plan and payor priorities – continuous quality improvement and healthcare cost containment. Freespira has the ability to improve member access to health care regardless of geographic or economic barriers.

– Karen Fischbach, Sr. Manager, Strategic Business Lead, Point32Health

Freespira rises to the challenge

Freespira, Inc., the creator and manufacturer of Freespira, the first and only FDA-cleared medication-free, at-home treatment for panic disorder and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) symptoms, emerged as the winner of the first Point32Health Innovation Challenge. Leveraging principles from cognitive science, respiratory physiology, and mobile technology, the Freespira treatment was crafted to deliver an evidence-based intervention to treat the symptoms of panic disorder and PTSD.

Freespira works by addressing dysfunctional breathing patterns caused by CO2 hypersensitivity. The treatment provides guided breathing exercises and real-time feedback, facilitated by a live coach and a user-friendly application. The Freespira solution provides breath-to-breath feedback of respiration rate and exhaled carbon dioxide (CO2), important underlying physiological factors in these conditions, teaching self-management skills aimed at normalizing dysfunctional breathing. The self-guided sessions coupled with 1:1 coaching ensure personalized treatment that addresses each patient's unique needs for engagement and guidance during the 28-day treatment protocol.



I think what differentiates Freespira is that they have the ability to engage members, they have the ability to talk with them one on one, to do an assessment to understand the applicability of Freespira to their condition, and then effectuate the ability to deliver that via device in a timely manner.

– Jason Parent, former Director of Clinical Innovation, Point32Health

Freespira rises to the challenge

The advantages of Freespira over conventional treatments include:



Accessibility

Freespira is an at-home treatment, and the system is shipped directly to the patient, eliminating barriers to care associated with geographical distance, transportation and mobility limitations, and healthcare infrastructure disparities. Moreover, while the device is Wi-Fi enabled, Freespira treatment is not Wi-Fi dependent, thereby effectively bridging the digital divide that impacts many individuals in rural communities.



Standardized protocol

The system provides patients with real-time feedback of their exhaled CO₂ and respiration rate as they proceed through each treatment session. The patient utilizes the Freespira treatment twice per day for 28 days at home with weekly coaching sessions conducted virtually. The intervention protocol is standardized to achieve specific post-treatment breathing patterns.



Efficacy

Freespira's efficacy in reducing the symptoms of panic disorder, panic attacks and PTSD has been demonstrated in multiple peer-reviewed studies. More importantly, Freespira patients experienced durable symptom relief measured at 1-year post-treatment in multiple clinical studies.



Empowerment

By providing patients with real-time feedback on their breathing patterns and progress, Freespira empowers them to proactively manage their condition, fostering self-efficacy. Furthermore, the ability for patients to not only feel better but also to visualize evidence of their improvement creates powerful engagement with the treatment.

Freespira's winning approach

Point32Health and Freespira: Solutions, actions, results, and future prospects of the collaboration

Freespira won the first Innovation Challenge because the organization offered proven clinical outcomes, while also providing solutions for the major challenges inherent in implementing a new program for any health plan.

Effective member outreach: Using comprehensive analytics, Freespira identified and stratified members based on their likelihood to benefit from the treatment. This targeted approach maximized health plan member engagement from the start. An ongoing omni-channel marketing campaign with condition-specific messages was designed and deployed to drive responses.

Workflow integration: Freespira is able to seamlessly integrate into existing workflows, and the structured implementation plan demonstrated the ability to be flexible and a strong commitment to collaboration. Freespira crafted a detailed implementation guide outlining responsibilities, goals, and timelines. Weekly check-in meetings ensured accountability and progress tracking.

Patient and provider satisfaction: Freespira provides each patient with a post-treatment survey and continuously strives to improve the experience for both patients and providers. Harvard Pilgrim Health Plan members who took the post-treatment survey reported high satisfaction rates with a net promoter score (NPS) score of 68 and a customer satisfaction score (CSAT) of 96.7%. These scores were consistent with high levels of engagement and adherence to treatment.

Cost containment: Compared to traditional mental health interventions requiring frequent provider visits and prescription medications, Freespira is a one-time medication-free alternative that reduces healthcare expenditures while optimizing treatment outcomes. Freespira has published impressive health economics outcome data, demonstrating cost savings of 35% in a commercial health plan population and a proven return on investment (ROI) in year 1. Comparable cost savings have been achieved in Medicaid and Medicare populations.

Mitigation of financial risks: Notably, Freespira offered performance guarantees, reducing financial risk for Point32Health. Freespira's risk-based pricing model aligned with the health plan's initiatives to improve member care while also decreasing costs. Freespira explores creative contracting models with payors, such as outcome-based agreements or performance guarantees that tie reimbursement to predefined clinical outcomes or cost-savings targets. This risk-sharing approach mitigates financial risk and uncertainty for payors. Yet another benefit is Freespira's ability to bill directly via claims and streamline the financial process, using specific CMS Healthcare Common Procedure Coding System (HCPCS) codes for digital behavioral health therapies.

68

**Net promoter
score (NPS)**

96.7%

**Customer satisfaction
score (CSAT)**

35%

**Cost savings in a
commercial health plan**

Highly successful implementation

Key milestones included:

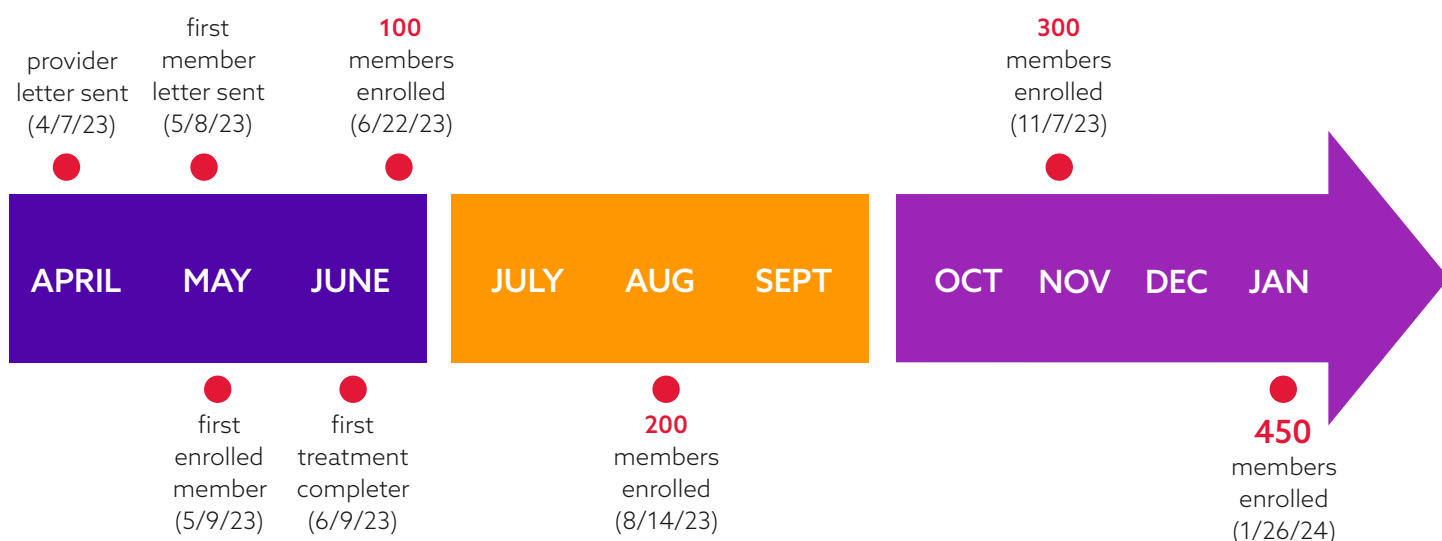
Implementation: The collaboration involved comprehensive planning, with key personnel from both organizations attending weekly meetings to ensure all aspects of the launch were on track.

Member and provider engagement: Freespira launched targeted marketing campaigns and provided extensive educational resources to members and providers. This included co-branded materials and a variety of outreach methods such as emails, direct mail, and social media.

Enrollment and treatment: In just nine months, 450 members were enrolled in the Freespira program. This rapid enrollment highlighted the program's effectiveness and the strong demand for such innovative treatments.



Enrollment timeline



Impressive outcomes and results



Unprecedented enrollment success

Higher than anticipated enrollment showcased the large need which was supported through rapid engagement and adoption.



Consistently high adherence rates

A remarkable 74%, driven by exacting member identification, targeted member outreach, and personalized high-tech and high-touch support.



Performance metrics

Quarterly business reviews provide valuable insights into engagement outcomes, clinical outcomes, cost savings, marketing effectiveness, and patient satisfaction.



Conclusion

Shared values and goals formed the foundation of the collaboration between Point32Health and Freespira, but clear communication, objectives, and accountability enabled a smooth integration. Importantly, both organizations have an abiding commitment to health equity and empowering patients to proactively address mental health concerns.

The successful collaboration between Point32Health and Freespira set the stage for future collaborations and expanded initiatives. Freespira's ability to overcome common implementation challenges demonstrates the organization's overarching commitment to long-term, mutually beneficial collaborations. Significant symptom reductions post-treatment, as measured using validated outcome tools, further confirmed and validated the efficacy and impact of the venture.

The Point32Health Innovation Challenge facilitated a transformative process, addressing critical challenges inherent in new treatments to health plan members. It united two organizations and forged a true collaboration between Point32Health and Freespira. This enduring relationship exemplifies the power of collaboration to realize a common goal: Addressing the unmet needs and improving healthcare outcomes for members.



By supporting innovative companies like Freespira, Point32Health can provide its members with cutting-edge treatments that improve health outcomes and promote health equity. The long-term collaboration formed through the challenge ensures that successful solutions are integrated into the health plan, benefiting members for years to come."

– Jason Parent, former Director of Clinical Innovation, Point32Health

Key takeaways for health plans from Point32Health



- Health plans should seek out and champion innovation and assess potential partners' ability to deliver and make good on their promises.
- Since plans that innovate are already assuming risk when they depart from conventional treatment, they should look for partners that are willing and sufficiently confident to assume financial risk.
- When a plan provides an innovative treatment – especially a one-and-done treatment like Freespira – it increases the likelihood of retaining, rather than losing members, and over time, caring for these members will be less costly.
- Many innovative technologies are not adopted or simply languish because the companies that develop them don't know how to engage with health plan members, and don't understand how to integrate their innovations into providers' workflows.

Key takeaways for MedTech developers from Freespira

- Provide an easy path to implementation without creating extra work or excess burden for the health plan.
- Reduce the risk associated with the introduction of a new treatment modality by accurately identifying appropriate candidates for the treatment.
- Demonstrate the ability to deliver cost savings, reduce emergency department and other outpatient visits and costs associated with unnecessary or excess utilization.
- Offer at-risk pricing to completely assume financial risk, allowing health plans to only pay for patients that enroll, complete the treatment, and have favorable clinical outcomes. With Freespira's at-risk pricing, health plans realize economic benefits in the first 90 days.

