The PaTH network is an integrated research network between several academic health institutions across several states that has established an electronic health record (EHR)-based data infrastructure. This has allowed researchers to have much greater access to a specific population or disease category to study because electronic health data can be extracted across all health systems within the PaTH network. So, for example, instead of looking at 500 patients with a particular disease X at one institution, we can now extract EHR data on 5,000 patients with disease X by pulling EHR data from all health institutions within the PaTH network.

The PaTH network is one of several Clinical Data Research Networks across the country, funded through the Patient-Centered Outcomes Research Institute as part of PCORnet. All CDRNs use the Common Data Model for standardizing electronic health record data for research purposes.

The PaTH to Health: Diabetes study, funded by the Patient-Centered Outcomes Research Institute (PCORI), is utilizing the PaTH network to examine if recent policy changes resulting in expanded health insurance coverage for obesity counseling has improved weight loss for adults either with or at high risk of type 2 diabetes. Since overweight patients are at highest risk for diabetes, improved weight management services could prevent diabetes and its negative health outcomes. EHR and claims data for over 2 million patients with or at risk of type 2 diabetes across states participating in the PaTH network will be extracted and analyzed to determine if receipt of obesity counseling has improved weight and diabetes outcomes. Patient Co-Investigators as well as a robust group of stakeholders are engaged in key research activities, strengthening the project through their expertise and lived experience.

Flip to learn more about the PaTH of EHR data
The Nib

When you remove the layers of a cacao seed, you find the nib, the innermost part of the seed. In our analogy, this represents specific health data from a research study.

The nib represents a specific disease or medical value being examined in a research study.

Chocolate Liquor

Extracted and generated into a consistent format at each institution.

This step ensures that all patient data is in a standard format, using standard language at a single institution.

Chocolate Crumb

Once the crumb is formed by adding milk and sugar, there’s no way to separate the individual nibs, or in our analogy, patients’ EHRs. This makes it impossible to connect health information with a patient’s identity before the data is stored and protected behind each network institution’s firewall.

The CDM organizes data from multiple institutions into a standard structure so that each healthcare system is speaking the same language.

Conching Process

Common Data Model = CDM

Now you’re ready to dive into the treat, or for researchers, when they can dive into data, make connections, help answer important questions, and improve health outcomes.

Chocolate Molds

Chocolate Bar = Each Site’s Dataset

This represents a specific disease or medical value being examined in a research study.