





## TOP 100 EMERGING LEADERS

determinants of health. She also works with provider systems positioning themselves toward assuming global risk. Parris-Benjamin leads an opioid workgroup focused on increasing awareness, stigma reduction, and education of the company employees and community agencies. She has led the development and implementation of Peer-Recovery models and served as a key speaker for the Partnership for a Drug Free NJ's "Knock Opioid Out of New Jersey" Initiative.



Virag Shah, MBA
Associate Regional Medical Officer
CareMore Health
University of California at Irvine

Virag Shah as served at CareMore Health, where he is Associate Regional Medical Officer, since 2017. CareMore Health is a health-care delivery system. Shah got his bachelor of science degree in biological science from Northwestern University and later enrolled in their Medical Honors Program. He got his Masters in Business

Administration from the University of California at Irvine. In his spare time, Shah is an Assistant Clinical Professor of Family Medicine at UCI as well.



## THE POWER TO EXECUTE HER VISION



By Katie Marler

After Elyse Dickerson lost her big pharma job in 2015, she began her own company along with cofounder Joe Griffin. Dickerson decided to do things differently from what she had experienced in her corporate career.

"We wanted to create a company that put people first and money second," she said. The pair felt that large corporations often had their priorities wrong; that they were so focused on profits that they had lost sight of the individuals working for the company.

Elyse Dickerson

Added Griffin: "It's almost as if the patient became secondary to whatever was being developed."

Their company, Eosera, produces ear-care products, including products that relieve impacted earwax, ear pain, and ear itch. Dickerson's journey illustrates how individuals can have an impact on the workplace by becoming entrepreneurs and being their own boss.



A top priority for Dickerson was the wage gap between men and women, something she had come to realize was a problem during her two decades of experience in the health-care and pharmaceutical Gabby Barrientos

industries. She had learned what it was like to experience a lack in workplace equity.

According to research conducted by PayScale (found on PayScale.com) in 2019, women still earn 79 cents to every man's dollar. The gap is even larger for women of color.

What's equally as important as the gender wage gap is the opportunity gap women face today across high-level and low-level positions, Dickerson believes. Not only are women being paid less than men for the same job at the same level of experience, but they're being passed up for promotions, job opportunities, and projects, she said.

Dickerson made it her mission to speak up against the gender wage gap and be vocal about inequalities she sees in the workplace.

The experience of the Fort Worth, Texas-based company also shows that a company can pursue goals like equity and can they have a happier workplace and a profitable business. By doing their part as a company to close the gender wage gap and support women in the workplace, Eosera has grown their majority women manufacturing team.

"I've never had supervisors or bosses like [Elyse and Joe]," said Gabby Barrientos, the manufacturing team lead. "They're very nice people and it's fun to come to work. I never thought I'd work in a place like this; it's exciting."



Elyse Dickerson was able to run a company the way she thought a company should be run - when she started her own

"I love working here because the people are good," said Margarita Corrales, who works in manufacturing.



## The women of Eosara

Eosera has grown swiftly since its conception in 2015. Its first product, EARWAX MD®, hit the shelves in early 2017, and they now have six additional ear care products with two more in the pipeline. The company has hired four new people in three capacities—all of them women.

The company's emphasis on people before profits is a drawing card.

Eosera also likes to support other local female-owned businesses in the form of mentorship. For instance, Dickerson mentors other female entrepreneurs hoping to succeed in business.

"Part of my purpose in this company and in this world is to empower other people to take risks and go beyond where they thought they could go, especially women," Dickerson said. "I want to be an example of someone that does that."

## SEPARATING MYTH FROM FACT WITH REGARDS TO DISABILITY EMPLOYMENT



By Nadine Vogel

The hiring, mainstreaming and full inclusion of people with disabilities isn't about doing what's right, but about doing what's right for the individual, the company and society. In order to accomplish this, companies must first change their mindset about what these individuals bring to the table; embracing their strengths and often unique talents such as those illustrated by people on the neuro diverse spectrum or those with physical disabilities.

My daughter has often dealt with and solved more challenges before she starts work than many who have worked a full eight-hour day. I have spent the last 28 years seeing how she has had to adapt to our inaccessible and insensitive world and, in doing so, has developed skills that companies yearn for in their employees: problem solving, persistence and innovation to name a few. But mindset alone will not fix the problem of significant unemployment.

Approximately 28 of the U.S. population, 56 million people, live with some form of disability which is only going to grow as this country's silver tsunami expands. It's the only minority group anyone can join at any time.

Yet despite these facts, coupled with a demanding legislative environment, less than 40 percent are currently in the workforce compared to almost 80 percent of our nondisabled peers. In fact, only 13 percent of companies that are U.S. federal contractors have reached the Department of Labor's utilization goal of having seven percent of their workforces represented by people with disabilities; at least as identified by employee surveys required by the Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs (OFCCP).

To be clear, when we speak about disability, we are referring to those who are born with or who have an acquired disability (visible or not) which may be as a result of aging, military service, illness, accident, etc. It has been estimated that 30 percent of our veterans have a disability.

And this statistic does not even begin to include the caretakers, friends and family members who make purchasing, travel and other important decisions often based on the needs of the individual with the disability. For instance, 30 percent of U.S. families have at least one member with a disability, not including parents who have at least one child with special needs, a cohort that represents approximately 10 percent of the U.S. workforce.

The sheer numbers should help company executives take notice and acknowledge that to be gainfully employed, whether disabled or not, is a human right; a civil right, where social, political, health, technology, business and financial issues intersect. Once acknowledged, these corporate leaders must be willing to take ownership, not of the issues but of the solutions to effectively and sustainably integrate individuals with disabilities into their workforces, workplaces and even their marketplaces.



