**Category 4: 328. Team Achievement: Syneos Health Communications**

**Nominator Name:** Anna Khersonsky

**Company/Organization:** Syneos Health® Communications

**Title/Role:** Managing Director, Chandler Chicco Agency, a subsidiary of Syneos Health

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**Nominee Name (Company/Organization/Team):** Syneos Health SMA Team

**Type of Creative Team (Ad Agency, Corporate Communication Department, Digital Firm, Public Relations Firm, etc.):** PR Agency

**City/State or Province/Country:** New York, NY

**Nominee’s creative function within the overall organization?**

This cross-functional, 15-member [Syneos Health](https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=2ahUKEwi5u5auoqiBAxVEkIkEHVGLANMQFnoECAcQAQ&url=https%3A%2F%2Fsyneoshealthcommunications.com%2F&usg=AOvVaw1aOKRtaEqF4WDQ6rlcBare&opi=89978449) SMA team works directly with the spinal muscular atrophy (SMA) community to support Genentech’s corporate commitment to the SMA community and promote the company’s treatment for SMA, Evrysdi® (risdiplam) through both branded and unbranded efforts. SMA is a genetic disorder characterized by progressive muscle weakening that can diminish basic functions such as walking, eating and even breathing.

As part of this work, the team supports Genentech’s [*SMA My Way*](https://www.smamyway.com/)program, which highlights the lived experiences of people impacted by SMA around the world.

Through the team’s collaborative efforts, which include social media, media relations, materials creation and event planning, the team has developed groundbreaking creative campaigns that are rooted in patient insights.

The Syneos Health SMA team is part of [Chandler Chicco Agency](https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=2ahUKEwjnx4a5oqiBAxU7kokEHdnIC2UQFnoECAcQAQ&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.ccapr.com%2F&usg=AOvVaw1lpluFSUwWnxYA-zn4XWgz&opi=89978449), which is a subsidiary of Syneos Health Communications. Customers come to Syneos Health for communications programs that influence the encounters when and where health decisions are made. Our holistic approach means immersing ourselves in customer business to provide insights, ideas and programs that yield measurable results. With a diverse set of healthcare communications specialties under one umbrella, we are able to deliver integrated counsel and expert insight from a variety of strategic perspectives.

Our public relations teams conceive breakthrough creative campaigns grounded in deep customer insight and integrated under a unifying multi-channel strategy. When done with the flawless execution we provide, these programs raise awareness and produce meaningful, measurable behavior change among audiences.

Public Relations brings value to customers by taking them from the "what" to the "how", by:

* Seeing the next big thing: expanding discussions beyond known limitations
* Adding perspective and insight: being a strategic partner, not just implementing the work
* Looking beyond the brand: integrating and leveraging assets beyond brand PR to build markets and relationships
* Driving for results: knowing how to move the bar forward to get the job done

Our public relations agencies offer best-in-class capabilities spanning public relations, digital and social media, medical and scientific education, and research and analytics. For more than 20 years, we have helped healthcare customers build and tell meaningful stories to inspire action, such as encouraging patient recruitment and retention through the development of clinical trial media. Our teams create communications that enhance brand perception, drive engagement, activate behavior shifts and deliver on the bottom line.

**Why should this team be recognized? What do they do that is exceptional?**

The depth and breadth of talent on this team is unparalleled. Each individual brings tremendous creativity, never just checking the box but rather having the foresight and initiative to pounce on opportunities to give voice to those who are historically underrepresented or misrepresented in the media.

This team has the uncanny ability to understand the needs of the patient community and strategically marry them with engaging storytelling that grabs attention and gets messages from the community out into the world.

We knew from the start that the trailblazing programs we set out to accomplish were going to be an incredibly complex undertaking, situated squarely in uncharted territory for us and Genentech. Yet, this team managed to pull them off spectacularly, less than a year from first concept to debut.

Most importantly, the team never lost sight of the fact that we were entrusted with amplifying the stories of a group who remain marginalized even among DEI-minded circles. That humility was reflected in every late night and every tiny flourish we took the time to get just right.

**Previous recognition: i.e. internal and/or awards**

* The team’s first innovative corporate commitment campaign, [SPACES](https://smamyway.com/the-song/), was launched in November 2021 and continued to enjoy a long tail of coverage well into 2022. SPACES is a first-of-its-kind song and music video written and directed by the SMA community with the goal of increasing disability visibility in the creative sphere. Organically, SPACES earned 50+ new media stories in 2022, and SPACES singer/songwriter James Ian was invited to perform the song live on stage 3 times, including at the Special Olympics USA Games. SPACES won 24 awards in 2022, including 4th Best Overall at the [National SABRE Awards](https://www.provokemedia.com/events-awards/sabre-awards/global-sabre-awards/2022-global-sabre-awards-winners), Silver in Best Diversity and Inclusion Initiatives Campaign at the [Bulldog Awards](https://bulldogawards.com/winners-circle/winners-pr-awards/), and Best Overall Video at [Ragan’s Video](https://www.ragan.com/awards/video-visual-virtual-awards/2022/winners/#writeup-best-overall-video-0), Visual and Virtual Awards.

**Examples of work product / About Project**

More than a quarter of the U.S. population lives with a disability. Yet, despite a push for diversity and inclusion, the fashion industry remains largely blind to anyone outside the able-bodied norm. As a result, it’s challenging for disabled people to find fashion-forward, accessible clothing that expresses their individuality.

It’s a missed opportunity, which the Syneos Health SMA team sought to tackle in 2022, alongside Genentech and a creative group of people living with SMA

The vision: Empower the SMA community to make a bold, stereotype-busting statement about inclusivity in fashion that echoes across the national stage. The result was a first-of-its-kind fashion show, with start-to-finish SMA community involvement.

Specifically, the team set out to:

* Create an extensive PR campaign resulting in at least 20 pieces of original media coverage, including:
* 1 top-tier consumer media placement
* 50% of coverage mentioning Genentech
* Create an accessible high fashion event, on par with the best of New York Fashion Week (NYFW), with:
* 100 people in attendance, including 10 members of the media
* Create authentic and engaging digital/social media content resulting in:
* 25,000 fashion show livestream views/engagements
* 500,000 video views/engagements across platforms

Accomplishing this task would require going beyond the tried-and-true pharma/healthcare communications playbook of working with disease advocacy groups or paying a celebrity spokesperson. Instead, Syneos Health sought to facilitate an authentic, community-driven program that would reinforce Genentech’s commitment to the people they serve.

Syneos Health and Genentech engaged 15 members of the SMA community to map out the program, including messages and overall look/feel of the show, culminating with the group hitting the runway ahead of NYFW wearing accessible garments they helped create. With this program, the SMA community wanted to invite looks not because of their disabilities but because of their style and individuality and to encourage the fashion industry to re-examine the need for inclusive clothing.

To pull off an immersive, ADA-compliant high fashion event with the production value of a top-tier NYFW show, Syneos Health enlisted the help of fashion industry professionals, stylists, musicians, and world-renowned fashion show director Lynne O’Neill. Syneos Health also forged a partnership with leading voices in adaptive design at the nationally-recognized non-profit [Open Style Lab](https://www.openstylelab.org/) to produce custom, accessible fashion for the show, in collaboration with the SMA community.

[Double Take](https://www.smamyway.com/the-fashion-show/) drew an in-person audience of 200+, including 30+ members of the media (from Vogue, The New York Times and Rolling Stone). A live Q&A with the participants offered first-hand insights about how the garments were adapted and explored inclusivity and representation in fashion.

Strategic pre-show media outreach targeting national fashion outlets, pharma trades and participants’ local media markets resulted in 130+ earned stories, despite Queen Elizabeth’s passing hitting the headlines immediately after the show. Meanwhile, a digital partnership with NYFW helped grab the fashion industry’s attention.

Syneos Health and Genentech worked with participants to create an extensive video campaign across Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, TikTok and YouTube. Authentic, personal stories conveyed the challenges of finding accessible clothing, while vlogs shared the once-in-a-lifetime experience of preparing to walk/roll a NYFW runway.

For those unable to attend in person, a [YouTube livestream](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yMXQws86GSo&t=2s) was hosted on the channel of YouTubers Shane and Hannah Burcaw (Shane is living with SMA), which racked up 275K+ views, 11K+ likes and 1,095+ comments.

Double Take struck a chord, with 51 unique national media stories, including 11 top-tier consumer verticals that don't follow pharma/healthcare, such as [People](https://people.com/style/open-style-lab-brings-spinal-muscular-atrophy-awareness-to-nyfw-with-inclusive-debut-runway-show/), [Daily Beast](https://www.thedailybeast.com/disabled-models-and-designers-take-center-stage-at-new-york-fashion-week?ref=scroll), and [Women’s Wear Daily](https://wwd.com/fashion-news/sportswear/open-style-lab-plans-double-take-fashion-show-for-sma-community-1235303315/) (picked up by Apple News). Vogue ran [two unique articles](https://www.vogue.com/article/nyfw-spring-2023-preview) about the show and [Elle](https://www.statnews.com/2022/09/16/at-a-fashion-show-for-people-with-spinal-muscular-atrophy-models-take-back-their-own-stories/?utm_source=STAT+Newsletters&utm_campaign=9f11577447-MR_COPY_01&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_8cab1d7961-9f11577447-154776284) listed Double Take as one of their top five NYFW moments. Genentech was mentioned in every media hit. Engagement on NYFW channels surpassed fashion industry giants, including Badgley Mischka, Christian Siriano and Jonathan Simkhai.

The program was applauded on stage at the 2022 STAT Summit and will be featured in a panel at Reuters’s Pharma USA 2023 as a case study on innovative patient engagement.

Additional Metrics:

* 1M+ video views of Double Take content
* 541 social posts about the show from SMA community and fashion industry
* 425K+ engagements with Genentech and participant content
* 9.8M+ impressions across Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, TikTok and YouTube
* 298K+ link clicks driving to the Double Take live stream

Double Take went far beyond a traditional disease awareness campaign, advocating for meaningful change that affects the lives of millions and setting a high-water mark for how companies can and should work with the communities they serve.