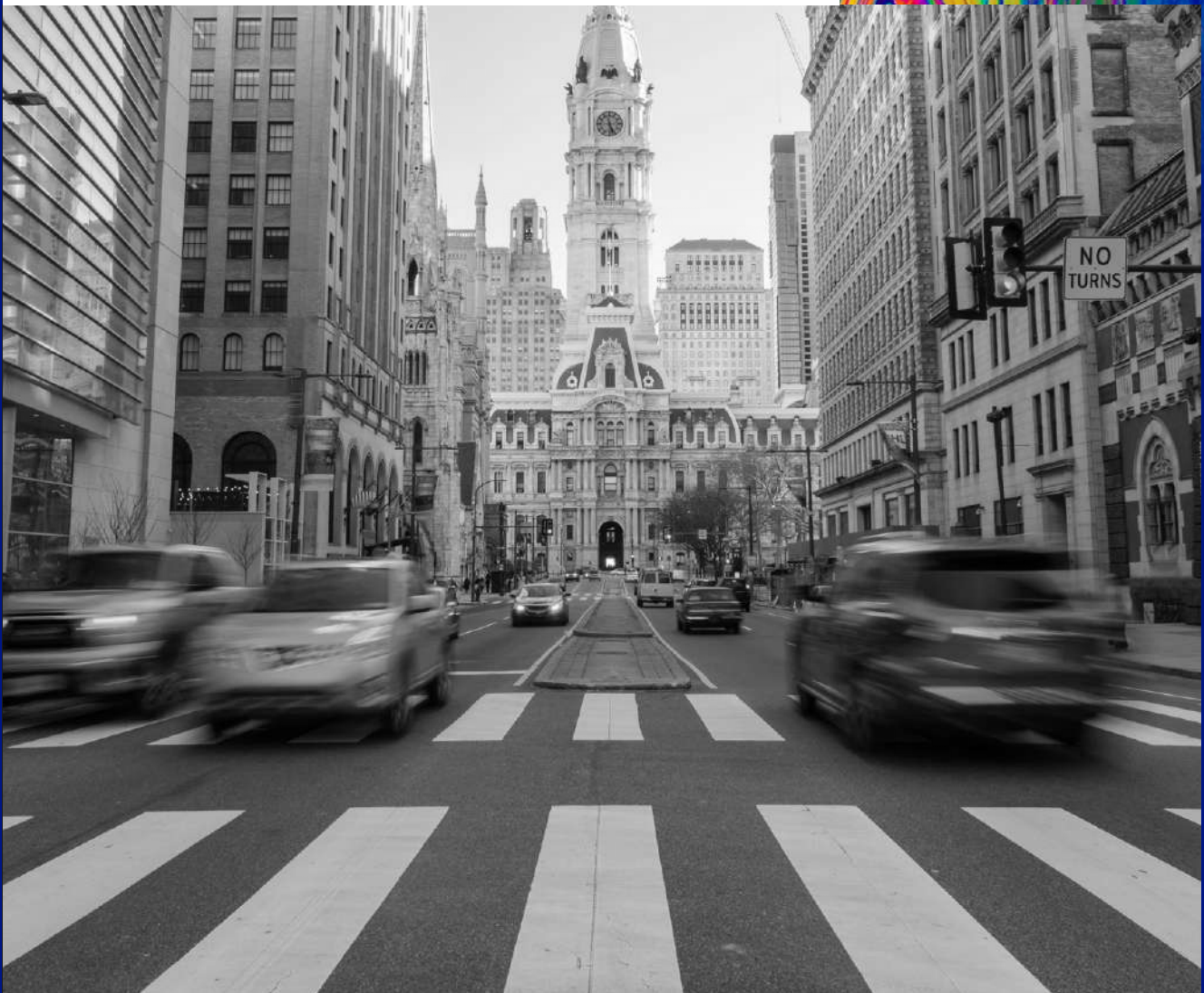
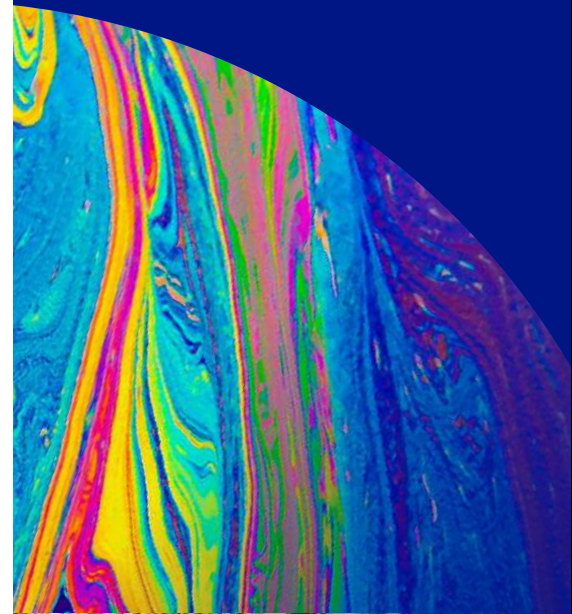


THE UNFAIR ADVANTAGE: HARNESS AI-POWERED MARKET INTELLIGENCE



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Executive Summary

On 28 April 2025, a group of senior pharma leaders gathered in Philadelphia, to confront a persistent problem: why, despite more data, bigger budgets, and faster timelines, are drug launches still failing to hit their mark?

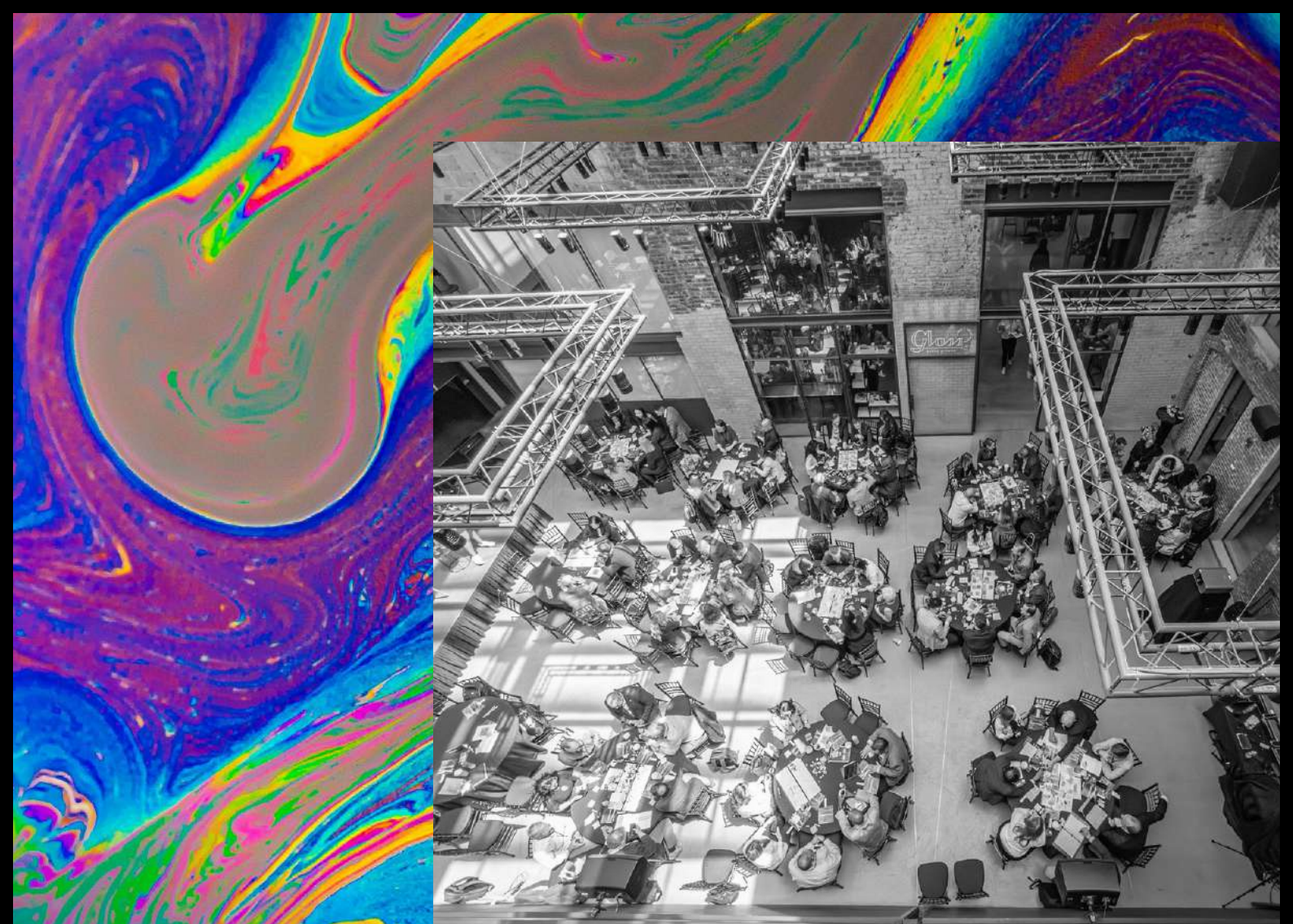
This cross-functional workshop—bringing together experts from AstraZeneca, GSK, Lilly, Biogen, Sanofi, Novartis and Chiesi—was built around a challenge: how can AI become a true unfair advantage in launch, not just a buzzword?

Over three hours, participants cut through the rhetoric and got honest about the root causes of launch failure. They explored the barriers holding teams back, interrogated their own assumptions, and stress-tested new models of collaboration, intelligence and adaptation.

By the end of the session, we'd not only diagnosed the systemic issues derailing today's launches, but also surfaced a shared belief: that success lies in reimagining launch as a living, learning system. The group had begun to define what a more adaptive, insight-led approach could look like. One that is driven less by rigid plans and more by real-time intelligence, cross-functional trust and a willingness to challenge outdated norms.

Authors

Impatient Health
Within3



WELCOME: A NEW WAY TO LAUNCH

Opening the workshop, Paul Simms drew a sharp contrast between how pharma currently thinks about launch—like a rocket, a meticulously planned one-shot approach—and how it might work instead, like a car journey: responsive, real-time and adaptive.

The rocket-launch approach means that everything rides on a single moment after months, even years of preparation. If anything, be it market shifts, data errors, or internal misalignment, goes wrong, the system is liable to fizzle out and crash back to earth.

In contrast, a car journey evolves in real time. Routes are adjusted. New information is incorporated. Success isn't about predicting every obstacle; it's about adapting intelligently. The workshop therefore proposed a radical question: can pharma embrace a car journey mindset? Can we stop chasing perfection, and instead, master adaptability?

Participants agreed that an attitude of perfectionism at all costs may be one of the greatest obstacles to embracing this mindset. This is a problem. In a world that increasingly values authenticity over polish, over-engineering can erode trust. It can also kill speed, creativity and learning—essential traits in today's volatile launch environment.





REALITY CHECK: CONFRONTING THE MYTHS



To shake up assumptions, attendees participated in a series of provocative “reality checks”, using coloured paddles to register agreement or disagreement with statements including:

- Achieving a successful launch is primarily about drug quality, not what people like us do
- We pretend to be data-driven, but really, we rely on gut instinct and politics
- First-year sales expectations are a reliable predictor of long-term success

The results were telling.

For example, when asked whether “we pretend to be data-driven, but mostly rely on gut instinct and politics,” nearly every paddle turned blue in agreement. Jung Lee (AstraZeneca) noted a key issue: “Even when we have the data, we use it to validate what we already think. It’s not insight—it’s confirmation.” Mark Montgomery (Novartis) added, “We’ve got data, sure. But aligning different functions around one version of the truth? That’s where the real friction lies.” Elena Lunina (Sanofi) pointed out the culture gap: “In medical, we still don’t have the behaviours that let us use data in an open, iterative way. And we’re not training people to ask the right questions.”

One particularly striking moment came when Marilyn Metcalf (GSK) argued that public

perception—not just internal thinking—can derail a launch: “Even with a great vaccine, fear or misinformation can override everything else”.

Few participants believed that quality alone determines success. The discussion revealed deep frustrations with current launch processes: insights ignored, data misused or siloed and strategies frozen long before they even make it to the field.

Participants also exposed a major fault line between medical and commercial teams. It was acknowledged that collaboration is essential to meaningful progress, but most agreed that real alignment remains elusive: misaligned insights, siloed decision-making and compliance firewalls continue to hinder launch success.



WHAT'S STALLING LAUNCHES?

Drawing from pre-submitted challenges and live discussion, four core issues emerged:

1

We can't act fast enough:

Shorter timelines are clashing with outdated, linear processes

2

We're missing key signals:

Data is abundant but often unusable, irrelevant or delayed

3

No one is aligned on strategy:

Fragmentation across teams leads to slow, confused execution

4

Our strategy is outdated by the time it's implemented:

The market moves, but the plan doesn't

Participants shared vivid examples of the consequences: internal friction, loss of trust between functions, missed market opportunities—and in some cases, total launch failure.

One striking observation was that the cost of misalignment isn't just financial. It corrodes relationships, burns out teams and locks organisations into cycles of blame rather than learning.

A CASE FOR A DIFFERENT APPROACH



Against this backdrop of frustration, the session introduced a case study:

participants heard from Lance Hill and Jason Smith of Within3, describing how one of their clients, a global pharma company, recently turned a high-pressure launch into a success story through AI-enabled collaboration.

The company had just acquired a biotech asset in a new therapeutic area. With limited internal expertise and tight timelines, they scrapped their old model of layered consultants and disconnected insight teams. Instead, they:

- Formed a hybrid medical-commercial launch team
- Consolidated unstructured and structured data into a shared insight platform
- Used AI to align strategy, surface early signals, and shape decisions across functions



Jason explained: “The key wasn’t the tech. It was getting medical and commercial to look at the same data at the same time, and to ask: what do we do now?”

The insight engine allowed the team to continuously challenge assumptions and adapt, not just plan ahead and hope that things fall into place.

Key enablers included:

- Centralised, accessible data lakes
- AI models capable of “asking better questions”
- An integrated steering group across functions, committed to challenging assumptions continuously

Faster decisions, tighter alignment, greater resilience when market conditions shifted are just some of the significant benefits to this approach. But it wasn’t technology alone that made the difference, but a deliberate culture shift towards learning faster than the market moved.

WORKING IT OUT



Armed with the case study inspiration, participants split into small groups to tackle the workshop's central provocation: how could AI help solve their real-world launch challenges and give us the insights we need to change direction fast?

Using a structured template, each group selected one challenge and explored:

- What key questions AI could help answer
- What data would be most valuable
- What three high-impact actions they could take

Some of the emerging ideas included:

- Using AI to track real-time market sentiment and adapt messaging accordingly
- Streamlining insight capture directly from the field via smart recording and transcription, eliminating manual reporting bottlenecks
- Building dynamic launch plans that evolve every quarter based on live market feedback
- Embedding medical insights into commercial planning from day one—not after the event

This brainstorm surfaced an important point: AI is not just about accelerating existing processes. It demands rethinking what those processes are for. Rather than perfecting the wrong assumptions faster, AI offers us the chance to ask better questions earlier, and then continually adapt our strategies to match.



BARRIERS TO OVERCOME

Despite the optimism, participants were brutally honest about the obstacles ahead. Cultural inertia, siloed data systems, regulatory fears and misaligned incentives were all named as major risks. The concern that, without clear governance and trust-building efforts, faster data could simply accelerate chaos rather than enabling smarter decisions was particularly acute and there was strong agreement that “technology alone won’t save us.” As one participant put it, without changing behaviours, incentives and mindsets, the best AI tools would be nothing but ‘lipstick on a pig’.



TOWARDS LAUNCH INTELLIGENCE



The day ended on a forward-looking note: what would it take to move from today's “launch by hope” to true launch intelligence?

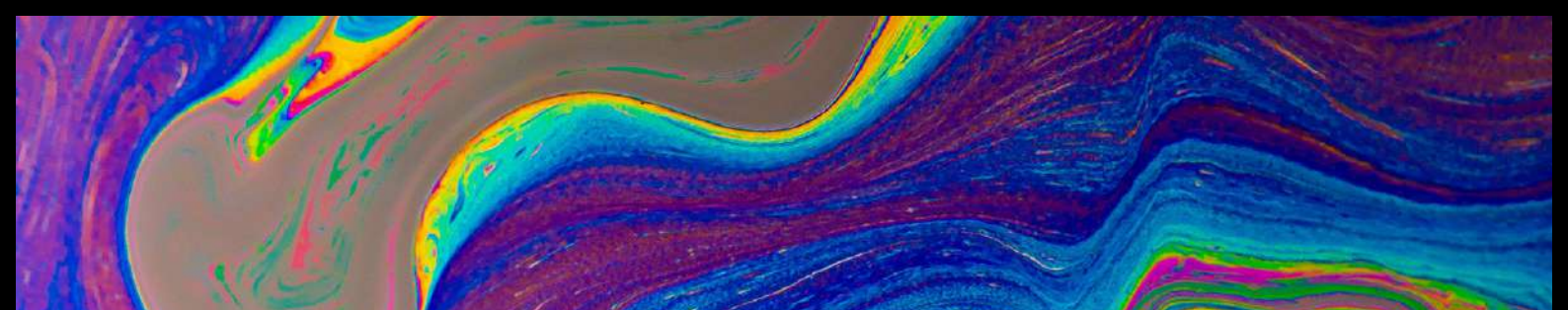
Participants agreed on several commitments:

- **Move first on integration:** Medical and commercial insights must be unified, not separated, from the start
- **Invest in the right data:** Less noise, more relevance. Prioritise quality signals over quantity
- **Redefine success:** Shift from output metrics (number of insights gathered) to outcome metrics (decisions made, behaviour changed)

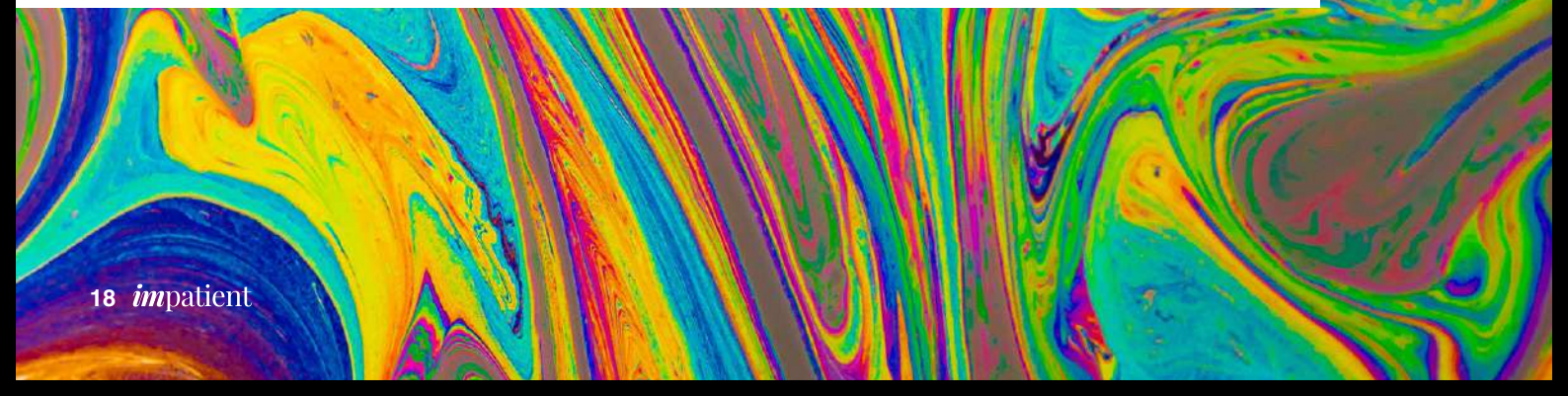
- **Use AI to provoke, not polish:** Challenge assumptions earlier, iterate faster and embrace learning loops

Above all, the group recognised that the unfair advantage isn't a tool or a technique. It's a mindset: curiosity over certainty, responsiveness over rigidity, humility over hubris.





FINAL TAKEAWAYS



The pharma launch strategy workshop was not about finding easy answers.

It was about asking better questions:

1

Where are we clinging to perfection at the cost of progress?

2

Where are we siloing data that could unlock smarter, faster action?

3

Where are we overbuilding strategy instead of building in adaptability?

If there was a single message that resonated across the day, it was this: **In today's launch landscape, speed is not enough. The true unfair advantage is the ability to learn faster than anyone else.**

The journey from rocket launches to car journeys won't happen overnight. But those willing to start now—to pilot, to provoke, to integrate and to learn—will be the ones who don't just survive pharma's launch revolution, but lead it.

impatient



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APRIL 2025

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