PORTAL is one of 29 networks in the National Patient-Centered Outcomes Research Network (PCORnet), which seeks to improve the nation’s capacity to conduct comparative effectiveness research by creating a large, representative network of care delivery systems and their data assets. The PORTAL network consists of Kaiser Permanente, HealthPartners, and Denver Health, and their 11 affiliated research centers.

When Henry Werch moved to Portland, Oregon, in early 2016, he enrolled in Kaiser Permanente Northwest (KPNW)’s health care program for seniors. He encountered some “puzzling blips” and began to pursue a channel to express his observations. Within a few months, he was appointed as a patient partner with KPNW’s Regional Operations Quality Group (ROQG).

This story exemplifies Henry’s approach to life. During and following a career in sales and marketing, he was active in civic affairs, holding numerous volunteer positions for nonprofit, city, county and state agencies in Illinois and Washington State. Prior to moving to Portland, he lived in Port Townsend, Washington, and served as a county planning commissioner and member of a state park advisory committee.

The son of a physician researcher and a medical social worker, Henry was raised in a health care environment and taught to value health care research. He served as the caretaker and patient advocate for his first wife, who had metastatic breast cancer, until she died in 1996. He remarried in 1998, and he and his wife, Stephanie, have advocated for many relatives and close friends contending with severe illness and/or death. Stephanie currently serves as a hospice chaplain for Legacy Health Care in Portland.

In addition to his role on the ROQG, Henry is a stakeholder member for a Kaiser Permanente study on home-based palliative care. He was pleased to join the PORTAL PEC in March 2018 and brings his caregiving perspective to the team. He explains: “What I have learned from my own experiences is that caregivers may feel the urge to ‘fix’ every problem peripherally associated with a patient and carry guilt when something feels impossible to ‘fix.’ Caregiving and patient advocacy can be a complex and exhausting experience, and caregivers need help just as patients do.”

Henry attended St. John’s College in Annapolis, Maryland, and the University of Chicago, and earned a Master’s Degree in Human Services Administration from Spertus College in Chicago.