

Maternal Health Disparities: The Women Behind the Data



Standing Committee on Reproductive Health, Equity, and Society
Global Forum on Innovation in Health Professional Education

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SERIES SCHEDULE

Webinars are held 12:00pm ET -- 1:00pm ET on the following Fridays:

- *May 3: Maternal Mental Health and The Work of Doulas*
- *May 17: Community Based Organizations and Innovative Models of Care*
- *May 31: Outcome Studies of Maternal Health Care and Disparities within Active-Duty Service*
- *June 14: Understanding Micro-aggression and Implicit Bias Awareness*
- *June 28: Building Trust in Healthcare Among Historically Marginalized Pregnant Women*

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June 28: Building Trust in Healthcare Among Historically Marginalized Pregnant Women



Yvette Roubideaux, MD, MPH is a physician, researcher, and public health advocate. She is a member of the Rosebud Sioux Tribe and is descended from the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe. She is an Adjunct Professor in the Department of Health Systems, Management, and Policy at the Colorado School of Public Health.

Dr. Roubideaux previously served as the Director of the Policy Research Center at the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) where she conducted and translated policy research and data to improve outcomes for American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) Tribal Nations. Her work at NCAI included the quality of census data, Native vote data, data disaggregation, COVID-19 data trends, research on diabetes in AI/ANs, and education on tribal governance of research and strengthening tribal-academic research partnerships. She served in the Obama Administration as a Senior Advisor to the HHS Secretary for American Indians and Alaska Natives and as the Director of the Indian Health Service (IHS).

Dr. Roubideaux's previous academic appointments include Clinical Professor and Associate Dean for Diversity, Inclusion, and Leadership at the Elson S. Floyd College of Medicine at Washington State University and Assistant Professor at the University of Arizona College of Medicine and Zuckerman College of Public Health. She served as the co-director of the Coordinating Center for the IHS Special Diabetes Program for Indians Diabetes and Cardiovascular Disease Prevention Demonstration Projects, directed training programs to encourage AI/AN students to enter health and research professions, is a founder of the Native Research Network, Inc., served as President of the Association of American Indian Physicians, and is an elected member of the National Academy of Medicine. Dr. Roubideaux received her undergraduate, medical and public health degrees at Harvard, authored several peer-reviewed research publications, and co-edited the 2001 book *Promises to Keep: Public Health Policy for American Indians and Alaska Natives*.



Karen A. McDonnell, PhD, is an Associate Professor in the Department of Prevention and Community Health at Milken Institute School of Public Health at the George Washington University (GWU). Dr. McDonnell is a public health program evaluation and implementation specialist with over 20 years of experience working with community groups, public health agencies, and health care systems both locally and globally. Dr. McDonnell's expertise lies in using mixed methods to look at complex public health issues and programs. Recent work includes collaborations to develop and test a community-centered FGM/C prevention project, evaluating the National Domestic Violence Hotline/loveisrespect Helpline, taking a public health approach to gender-based violence, and evaluating multi-systems changes in the Clinical Translational Science Institute with Children's National and GWU. Dr. McDonnell conducted trainings in public health policy, gender equity, and women's leadership and teaches coursework in Program Evaluation, Maternal

and Child Health, and works with undergraduate and graduate students, medical residents, and community groups to further the exploration of methods to meet our current complex public health challenges. Dr. McDonnell is the recipient of the ASPPH Early Career in Public Health Teaching Award, ASPPH Academy of Distinguished Teachers, and the Milken Institute SPH Excellence in Teaching Award.



Niraj R. Chavan, MD, MPH, FACOG, FASAM is a Maternal Fetal Medicine (MFM) and Addiction Medicine physician specializing in the management of substance use during pregnancy. Dr. Chavan is an Associate Professor in the Div. of MFM, Dept. of Obstetrics, Gynecology, and Women’s Health at Saint Louis University (SLU). He serves as the Medical Director of the Women and Infant Substance Help (WISH) Center at SLU / SSM Health, focused on managing perinatal substance use disorders (SUD) in St. Louis, MO. He also serves as the Program Director for the MFM fellowship, core faculty for the Addiction Medicine fellowship and Course Director for a SLU School of Medicine course on “Perinatal Addiction and Maternal Mental Health”. He is Board Certified in Obstetrics & Gynecology and Maternal Fetal Medicine through the American Board of Obstetrics & Gynecology (ABOG) and in Addiction Medicine through the American Board of Preventive Medicine (ABPM). He has lectured extensively on various aspects of perinatal SUD management at the local, regional and national level.

Dr. Chavan’s areas of clinical and research expertise include medical complications of pregnancy, perinatal substance use disorders, obstetric quality and safety, maternal health disparities, perinatal health equity, and health systems science. Dr. Chavan is an alumnus of the Masters in Public Health (MPH) program at the Harvard School of Public Health, the Master of Science in Medical Science (MSMS) program at the University of Kentucky, concentrating in clinical and translational science and the Intermediate Improvement Science Series (I2S2) program through Cincinnati Children’s Hospital – James Anderson Center for Health Systems Excellence. Most recently, Dr. Chavan was chosen for the first-ever Emerging Leaders Program through SMFM as well as the Robert Cefalo Leadership Training institute through ACOG. Dr. Chavan serves on the Board of Directors of the American College of Obstetrics & Gynecology (ACOG) as the Early Career Fellow-at-Large and is a member of the ACOG Committee on Clinical Practice Guidelines for Obstetrics, ACOG Quality and Safety Initiatives delegation and the Society of Maternal Fetal Medicine (SMFM) – Patient Safety and Quality Committee. Dr. Chavan also currently serves as the Chair Elect for the Missouri Perinatal Associated Mortality Review (PAMR) Board and is actively working with the Missouri Perinatal Quality Collaborative (MO PQC) to develop and implement statewide quality initiatives directed at reducing disparities in maternal mortality and severe maternal morbidity.



Carla Alvarado, PhD, MPH, is the director of research at the AAMC Center for Health Justice, Dr. Alvarado ensures the quality of research in the areas of data for health equity, maternal health equity, trustworthiness, and environmental justice. She ensures the application of asset-based and intersectionality frameworks to the center’s research to help inform policies and actions that address health inequities. Her expertise includes health policy, public health, population health, intersectionality, and health equity. She has previous experience in a variety of professional settings: corporate, government, academic, and nonprofit settings which include entities like Cigna/Evernorth; the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine; and the Office of the National Coordinator for Health Information Technology and local health departments.

Carla obtained a doctoral degree (PhD) in public health with a focus in health policy from Oregon State University College of Public Health and Human Sciences, a master's in public health (MPH) with a focus on management, policy, and community health from the University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston School of Public Health and a bachelor's degree (BA) in political science from the University of Texas- El Paso.



Lucinda Canty, PhD, CNM, FACNM, FAAN is a certified nurse-midwife with 30 years of experience, Associate Professor of Nursing, and Director of the Seedworks Health Equity in Nursing Program at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. She founded Lucinda's House, a Black Maternal Health Collective, to promote maternal health equity through community collaboration and programs that provide support and education. She earned a bachelor's degree in nursing from Columbia University, a master's degree from Yale University, specializing in nurse-midwifery, and a PhD from the University of Connecticut. Her research interest include addressing maternal mortality and severe maternal morbidity among Black women, eliminating racial disparities in reproductive health, promoting diversity in nursing, developing anti-racism initiatives and historical research in nursing and midwifery. She uses her lived experience as a Black woman, a historical perspective, her

poetry, art, and her research into racial disparities to offer a reproductive justice lens to improve racial disparities in maternal health. She is a fellow in the American Academy of Nursing and the American College of Nurse Midwives. She is the 2023 Yale School of Nursing Alumni Association (YSNAA) Distinguished Alumni Award Recipient and the recipient of the 2023 Florence S. Wald Award from the Connecticut Nurses' Association. She is the 2024 Columbia University School of Nursing 2024 Distinguished Alumni Award for Nursing Practice and recipient of the National Black Nurses Association's 2024 Trailblazer Award.



Ayesha Jaco, MAM, is a lifelong resident of Chicago's west side, and has dedicated her career to improving the health and economic vitality of the community she grew up in. As Executive Director of West Side United (WSU) founded by Ascension, Cook County Health, Lurie Children's RUSH, Sinai Chicago & UI Health, she leads programs and partnerships with additional anchor institutions, including nonprofits and churches, who work collaboratively to eliminate the 14-year life expectancy gap between Black and Brown residents on Chicago's West Side and Chicago's Loop. Under Ayesha's leadership, WSU has co created strategies that address social drivers of health including a small business grant program that has awarded \$2.5 million to support the development of more than 175 West Side businesses. Her team has also coordinated \$10 million in social impact investing funds pooled by WSU hospitals, American Medical Association, Illinois Medical District and Northern Trust to increase access to capital for west side communities through

600 low interest loans curated by Community Development Financial Institution partners to support affordable housing, community projects and other economic development projects.

As a member of the Garfield Park Rite to Wellness Collaborative, WSU was an instrumental partner along with other anchor and community partners in the selection of the Garfield Park Rite to Wellness Collaborative as the 2022 recipient of the Pritzker Traubert Foundation's \$10 million Chicago Prize for the development of Sankofa

Wellness Village. Ayesha is a member of the board of directors of Choose Chicago, the City's convention and tourism bureau, and also serves on the community advisory board for the Chicago Chronic Condition Equity Network.



Jules Javernick, DNP, CNM, is an Associate Professor and program coordinator for the Choice/Ascend Nursing Programs at Regis University's Loretto Heights School of Nursing. She currently chairs the Nurse Faculty Organization and was elected as a senator in the newly established Faculty Senate. Dr. Javernick's academic journey includes a BA from the University of Oklahoma, a BSN from Johns Hopkins University, and an MS and DNP degree from the University of Colorado College of Nursing. Her DNP project, which aimed to reduce the primary cesarean section rate among first-time mothers, earned her the Outstanding DNP Project Award in the year of her graduation.

With a career spanning 21 years in full-scope midwifery, Dr. Javernick played a pivotal role in introducing low-intervention birth suites into the traditional labor delivery unit at a local community-based hospital and was instrumental in establishing the Recovery Nurse Advocate program that supports pregnant people with substance use disorder. Dr. Javernick was honored with the 2023 Daisy Faculty Award for exceptional teaching and the 2024 Cura Personalis Award for her commitment to holistic care by Regis University's Rueckert-Hartman College for Health Professions. She is a member of the American College of Nurse Midwives and Sigma Theta Tau.



Noelene K. Jeffers, PhD, CNM, IBCLC is an Assistant Professor at the Johns Hopkins School of Nursing and a Certified Nurse Midwife with over 8 years of experience serving families in federally qualified health centers (FQHC), hospitals, and free-standing birth centers in Washington, DC. In her research, she utilizes Reproductive Justice and Black Feminist Thought frameworks to examine the socio-structural determinants of Black maternal health outcomes and develop innovative and culturally specific interventions grounded in the needs and strengths of the Black community. She is currently designing a postpartum intervention that incorporates collaborative midwifery and doula care to improve the postpartum cardiometabolic health of Black women and birthing people with hypertensive disorders in FQHC settings. She also conducts research on the promotion of Black maternal health equity through equitable partnerships between community-based doulas and healthcare systems. Dr. Jeffers earned her MSN from the Yale University School of Nursing and her PhD

from the Johns Hopkins University School of Nursing.



Maria J. Romo-Palafox PhD, RDN, LD is a dietitian and researcher from Mexico, specializing in the social, cultural, and environmental determinants of dietary patterns, particularly in early childhood. Her research is driven by policy considerations and timely advocacy needs. Dr. Romo-Palafox has extensive training and experience across various domains of nutrition research, from conducting fieldwork with indigenous rural populations in Mexico to collaborating with Hispanic and immigrant caregivers in Texas, Connecticut, and Missouri.

Her volunteer work as a clinical dietitian at Casa de Salud and as a nutrition educator at LifeWiseSTL ensures that her research remains relevant and impactful for the populations she serves. As an Assistant Professor of Nutrition and Dietetics at Saint Louis University and the leader of the MUNCH (Multicultural Understanding of Nutrition, Community, and Health) Research Group, she guides her team in addressing issues related to culture, education, and socioeconomic status that influence dietary patterns. By fostering a multicultural understanding of community nutrition and health, Dr. Romo-Palafox's work leads to informed policy and system interventions designed to improve dietary quality and address health disparities. Her research not only sheds light on critical factors affecting nutrition but also paves the way for sustainable, culturally relevant changes that promote better health outcomes and reduce inequities.

June 14, 2024: Understanding Micro-Aggression and Implicit Bias Awareness



Wanda Barfield, MD, MPH, FAAP, RADM USPHS (ret.) is Director of the Division of Reproductive Health (DRH) within the National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion (NCCDPHP) at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Dr. Barfield leads efforts to provide optimal and equitable health to women and infants through improved surveillance and applied public health research during the critical junctures of population health—pregnancy, infancy, and adolescence. Her division leads several programs to monitor maternal and infant mortality and morbidity; the impact of emerging threats to pregnant/postpartum women and their infants; and issues in women's reproductive health, from contraception and teen/unintended pregnancy to infertility and assisted reproductive technology. She received her medical and public health degrees from Harvard University and completed a pediatrics residency at Walter Reed Army Medical Center and a neonatal-perinatal medicine fellowship at Harvard's Joint Program in Neonatology (Brigham and

Women's Hospital, Beth Israel Hospital, and Children's Hospital, Boston). Before joining CDC in 2000, she was Director of the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit at Madigan Army Medical Center in Tacoma, Washington. Dr. Barfield is also an Adjunct Assistant Professor at Emory University School of Medicine. She is a Fellow with the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) and is the CDC liaison to the AAP Section on Perinatal Pediatrics (SoPPE) and Committee on Fetus and Newborn (COFN).



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and Child Health, and works with undergraduate and graduate students, medical residents, and community groups to further the exploration of methods to meet our current complex public health challenges. Dr. McDonnell is the recipient of the ASPPH Early Career in Public Health Teaching Award, ASPPH Academy of Distinguished Teachers, and the Milken Institute SPH Excellence in Teaching Award.



Diane J. Young, DrPH, MS, RN, is a Registered Nurse, public health leader, and practitioner with extensive experience in advancing public health innovation through community collaboration. She holds a Doctor of Public Health degree from George Washington University and frequently lectures and mentors undergraduate and graduate public health students at her alma mater. Dr. Young spearheads initiatives to improve Maternal Child Health service delivery, enhance perinatal outcomes, conduct public health research related to Maternal Child Health and the HIV epidemic, and to champion health equity. Before joining the Prince George's County Health Department, she held significant roles at the NIH, Kaiser Permanente, and MedStar Washington Hospital Center. She developed the Doula Credentialing Model (DCM), a framework designed as a foundation for the professionalization of doulas in the United States through education, training, standardized scope of practice,

and regulatory oversight. The DCM aims to improve maternal and child health outcomes by standardizing and elevating the role of doulas as a recognized labor category and professional practice. Dr. Young's unwavering commitment to innovation and collaboration continues to drive meaningful improvements in public health outcomes.



Janice Sabin, PhD, MSW, is a Research Professor, University of Washington, School of Medicine, Department of Biomedical Informatics and Medical Education. Dr. Sabin's expertise is racial/ethnic healthcare disparities experienced by historically minoritized populations with an emphasis on understanding mechanisms and pathways that lead to unequal treatment in care. Her research includes examining patient-provider communication in real-world clinic visits, healthcare clinicians' attitudes and beliefs toward race, ethnicity, weight, age, sexual orientation, other areas, and the impact of implicit bias on healthcare. Through federally funded grants, Dr. Sabin and colleagues are evaluating education for clinicians on implicit bias in healthcare, testing a health disparities educational intervention for medical residents and Doctor of Nursing Practice trainees. Dr. Sabin is working with an interdisciplinary team to develop technologies that assess whether implicit bias is influencing communication in clinical interactions. The goal of this

work is to develop an educational tool to improve clinician communication in medical interactions. Dr. Sabin's presentation topic areas include the history of racism in medicine, social determinants of health, health and healthcare inequities, the science of implicit bias, actions to mitigate the impact of implicit bias on individual and institutional behavior and the value of and best practices to increase workforce diversity.



Mary Own, MD, is a member of the Auk Kwaan Tribe of the Tlingit people. She is the Associate Dean of Native American Health at the University of Minnesota Medical School and an associate professor of family medicine. Upon graduating from the University of Minnesota medical school and residency, she returned to Alaska to provide full-scope family medicine care for her tribal community. In 2014 she returned to the University of Minnesota as the Director of the Center of American Indian and Minority Health (CAIMH). Her work includes: developing regional and national programs to increase the numbers of American Indian and Alaska Native students entering medical careers, outreaching to local and national Native leaders to ensure that the University of Minnesota Medical School remains in tune with American Indian and Alaska Native healthcare and education needs, teaching medical students and health care providers important factors in providing healthcare to AIAN communities, and developing and supporting research efforts to address AIAN health disparities. She continues to provide clinical care, including prenatal services, at the Center of American Indian Resources in Duluth and she is the immediate Past-President of the Association of American Indian Physicians.

May 31, 2024: Outcome Studies of Maternal Health Care and Disparities within Active-Duty Service



Julie Pavlin, MD, PhD, MPH, is the Senior Director, Board on Global Health at the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine where she coordinates analyses of health developments beyond US borders, and areas of international health investment that promote global well-being, security, and economic development. Prior to this position, she was a Research Area Director at the Infectious Disease Clinical Research Program, and the Deputy Director of the Armed Forces Health Surveillance Center. She is a retired Colonel in the US Army with previous assignments including the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences, the Armed Forces Research Institute of Medical Sciences in Bangkok, Thailand, the Walter Reed Army Institute of Research, and the US Army Medical Research Institute for Infectious Diseases. She concentrated most of her time with the Department of Defense in the design of real-time disease surveillance systems and was a co-founder of the International Society for Disease Surveillance. Dr. Pavlin received her AB from Cornell University, MD from

Loyola University, MPH from Harvard University and PhD in Emerging Infectious Diseases at the Uniformed Services University.



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Lynette Hamlin, PhD, RN, CNM, FACNM, FAAN, received her bachelor's and master's degrees in nursing from Loyola University of Chicago, her post-master's certificate in nurse-midwifery from the University of Illinois, and her doctorate in nursing from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee with a minor in public administration. Dr. Hamlin is Professor and Associate Dean for Faculty Affairs at the Graduate School of Nursing, Uniformed Services University. She was recently appointed as the inaugural USU Director, Military Women's Health Research Program. She is a Fellow in the American College of Nurse-Midwives and the American Academy of Nursing, a participant in the DHHS 2003 Primary Health Care Policy Fellowship, and a recipient of the coveted ACNM Kitty Ernst Award.



Tracey Pérez Koehlmoos, PhD, MHA, joined the faculty of the Uniformed Services University in July 2015 in order to lead the development of robust health services and policy research and graduate programs in support of the US Military Health System. She is the Director of the Center for Health Services Research and the Director of Doctoral Programs in Public Health. At the National Defense University, she serves as co-director of the Health and National Security concentration. Previously she served as the Special Assistant to the Assistant Commandant of the Marine Corps. With over 200 publications and multimedia products, Dr. Koehlmoos is a health systems and policy scientist who specializes in leading complex tasks, program development, and capacity building across the spectrum of health systems building blocks. Prior to transitioning to domestic and defense healthcare, she lived and worked in Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, Nepal, Bangladesh and Indonesia. She cut her teeth in public health leading the Health & Family Planning Systems Programme at ICDDR,B in Dhaka Bangladesh. Her research areas of interest include health equity, value-based care, women's health, systematic review, and health and National Security. She serves as the National Secretary of the Gold Star Wives of America and as the Deputy Chair of the Cochrane Library Oversight Committee. A former Army Air Defense Artillery officer she is the widow of COL Randall "Moose" Koehlmoos and mother of CPT Robert, Michael, and 1LT David Koehlmoos.



Monica Lutgendorf, MD, is the Chair of the Department of Gynecologic Surgery and Obstetrics at the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences. Dr. Lutgendorf attended the University of Southern California, where she received a B.S. in Chemistry. She received her Medical Doctorate in 2004 from the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences and completed her internship and residency in 2008 at Naval Medical Center Portsmouth, practicing there until 2011, when she began a Maternal-Fetal Medicine fellowship at Madigan Army Medical Center. After completing her fellowship in 2014, Dr. Lutgendorf joined the medical staff at Naval Medical Center San Diego, where she served as Division Director for Maternal-Fetal Medicine, Associate Residency Program Director, and Chair of the Defense Health Agency’s Women and Infants Clinical Community.

In 2021, she returned to USU as the Department Chair of the Department of Gynecologic Surgery and Obstetrics. Dr. Lutgendorf is committed to clinical standardization, provider support, medical simulation; and diversity, equity, and empowerment for women in healthcare. Her research interests include neuroprotection in preterm infants, non-invasive prenatal screening, simulation, quality improvement, healthcare disparities, intimate partner violence and posttraumatic stress disorder in pregnancy and the military.



Gayle “Hava” Haischer-Rollo, MD, is the Assistant Dean of Faculty Development and Associate Professor of Pediatrics at the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences in Bethesda, Maryland. Dr. Haischer-Rollo graduated with a Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of North Texas, and her medical degree from University of Texas Medical Branch in Galveston. She completed her Pediatric residency and Neonatal Fellowship at San Antonio Uniformed Services Health Education Consortium in San Antonio Texas. She spent several years as a core faculty of the NICU program at Naval Hospital Portsmouth before returning to San Antonio as the program director for the Neonatal Fellowship Program.

During career she found a passion for medical education and is currently enrolled in a Master of Health Professions Education program. As Assistant Dean for Faculty Development she travels around the military health system and teaches faculty development as well as oversees a program of “boots on the ground” faculty development called FOCUS (Faculty Development Certification of the Uniformed Services). She currently teaches within the USU allyship faculty development curriculum and is committed to improving healthcare quality through education, scholarship, and advocacy.

May 17, 2024: Community Based Organizations and Innovative Models of Care



Cat Dymond, MSN, CNM is a certified nurse-midwife, Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE), and a nurse entrepreneur, practicing in Atlanta, GA. They are passionate about centering Black and LGBTQIA+ communities and providing inclusive sexual and reproductive health through patient education incorporating health equity and reproductive justice. Cat has witnessed the transformative power of holistic healthcare as a pro bono doula for 30 years serving immigrant and low-income birthing people. They believe midwifery is a framework for innovation and emancipatory nursing praxis. Cat earned an Anthropology degree from Harvard University and a BSN and MSN from Emory University. Midwifery is their second career after working for more than 20 years in government social services. Their lived experience, training in evidence-based practice and trauma-informed care, allows them to create and implement successful policies and programs. Cat created Earthseed Midwifery,

a grant-funded mobile/virtual health service that provides inclusive, online sexual and reproductive health education to marginalized communities. Cat's practice home has been the Atlanta Birth Center, where they've provided holistic, comprehensive, and family-centered midwifery care. Cat has been the recipient of numerous leadership awards, is a co-Leader of the National Advanced Practice Clinician (APC) Cluster for the Reproductive Health Access Project and sits on the Board of Directors of GLMA: Health Professionals Advancing LGBTQ Equality.



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teaches coursework in Program Evaluation, Maternal and Child Health, and works with undergraduate and graduate students, medical residents, and community groups to further the exploration of methods to meet our current complex public health challenges. Dr. McDonnell is the recipient of the ASPPH Early Career in Public Health Teaching Award, ASPPH Academy of Distinguished Teachers, and the Milken Institute SPH Excellence in Teaching Award.



Natalie D. Hernandez, PhD, MPH, is an Associate Professor in the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology and Executive Director of the Center for Maternal Health Equity at Morehouse School of Medicine (MSM). She received her Master of Public Health from Emory University and her Ph.D. in public health from the University of South Florida. Dr. Hernandez’s more than 17 years of research experiences and contributions to science have been dedicated to rigorous methodology using community engagement approaches to advance health equity through research and practice. Her research on advancing science toward the elimination of women’s health inequities takes a multi-sectoral and multi-level translational research approach. Her research explores the integration of technology to advance women’s health and provides easy access to

women’s health care. Dr. Hernandez is an R01 NIH funded researcher who has obtained diverse extramural funding to develop multiple lines of research. Most recently, she is the Principal Investigator of the inaugural NIH Maternal Health Research Centers of Excellence focused on Black Maternal Behavioral Health. Dr. Hernandez has laid the groundwork for research in maternal health by establishing partnerships with local and national organizations dedicated to maternal morbidity and mortality disparities, evaluating maternal health interventions and programs, and validating effective measures of maternal mental health, medical mistrust, and psychosocial factors. She has received numerous awards for her research and dedication to community and sits on local and national maternal health organizations including but not limited to Georgia’s Maternal Mortality Review Committee and Georgia PRAMS Steering Committee. Dr. Hernandez has presented her work at various international, national, state and local conferences.



Emilia Iwu, PhD, RN, APNC, FWACN, is a clinical assistant professor and the assistant dean for the Center for Global Health at Rutgers School of Nursing. She also is a Ruth L. Kirschstein Postdoctoral Fellow at the University of Pennsylvania School of Nursing. Since 2006, Dr. Iwu has been a technical advisor for a U.S. CDC/PEPFAR (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention/President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief) program at the Institute of Human Virology Nigeria, where she developed national HIV treatment guidelines, policy documents, and training curricula for pre- and post-licensure education. She trained and mentored health workers to provide HIV care and continues her clinical and research work in Nigeria.

Dr. Iwu is the Nigerian principal investigator on the New York division of International Rescue Committee’s UK Aid Direct consortium grant involving four African countries. It is a five-year, longitudinal cohort, midwifery workforce grant in collaboration with the Nigerian Nursing and Midwifery Council. Iwu also received a Global Health Seed Grant in 2021 from Rutgers Global Health Institute for the project titled *Youth and Family HIV Stigma: Examining*

Potential Barriers to HIV Services and Stigma-Reduction Interventions. Her research in HIV task sharing received the Sigma Theta Tau International Global Research Award in 2014. She is an alumna of Rutgers and several fellowship programs, including the Carnegie African Diaspora Fellowship, Jonas Scholars, and Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Nurse Faculty Scholars programs. She is a member of the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine Global Forum on Innovation in Health Professional Education and holds leadership positions in local and international nursing organizations.



Brandi Sims Desjolaes, EdD, is a community change agent serving to correct social inequities in their many forms through research, advocacy, education and philanthropy. A Los Angeles native, she began her career in education reform with a focus on closing opportunity gaps. She currently serves as the Co-Founder and Director for the new Black Maternal Health Center of Excellence (BMHCE) at Charles R. Drew University of Medicine and Science. Brandi studied communications and philosophy at Howard University and completed her doctorate in Education at UCLA. Her research focused on university campuses as sites of Black reproductive justice. She also studied public health at the Escuela Nacional de Salud Pública in Havana, Cuba, where she learned first-hand about the Cuban Maternity Home model and is a certified doula and lactation educator. She sits on the LA County African American Infant and Maternal Mortality Prevention Initiative (AAIMM) Steering Committee, the organization that partnered with Charles Drew University (CDU) to create BMHCE. Given her educational and professional background, Brandi brings a deep understanding of the Black maternal health crisis and how to achieve solutions for reproductive justice.

May 3, 2024: Maternal Mental Health and the Work of Doula



Monica McLemore, PhD, MPH, RN is a preeminent scholar of antiracist birth equity research, community-informed methods, and policy translation. She earned a bachelor's degree in nursing from The College of New Jersey, a master's in public health from San Francisco State University and a PhD in oncology genomics at the University of California, San Francisco. Dr. McLemore's has focused her career in reproductive health, rights, and justice. She retired from active clinical practice after 28 years when was awarded tenure in 2019. She has 93 peer reviewed articles, OpEds and commentaries and her research has been cited in the Huffington Post, Lavender Health, five amicus briefs to the Supreme Court of the United States, and three National Academies of Science, Engineering, and Medicine reports. Dr. McLemore is the recipient of numerous awards and currently serves and she was inducted as a fellow of the American Academy of Nursing in 2019. She became the Editor in Chief of Health Equity

Journal in 2022. She currently serves as Director of Manning Price Spratlen Center for Anti-Racism and Equity in Nursing, at University of Washington School of Nursing and is a member of NASEM's Standing Committee on Reproductive Health, Equity, and Society.



Karen A. McDonnell, PhD, is an Associate Professor in the Department of Prevention and Community Health at Milken Institute School of Public Health at the George Washington University (GWU). Dr. McDonnell is a public health program evaluation and implementation specialist with over 20 years of experience working with community groups, public health agencies, and health care systems both locally and globally. Dr. McDonnell's expertise lies in using mixed methods to look at complex public health issues and programs. Recent work includes collaborations to develop and test a community-centered FGM/C prevention project, evaluating the National Domestic Violence Hotline/loveisrespect Helpline, taking a public health approach to gender-based violence, and evaluating multi-systems changes in the Clinical Translational Science Institute with Children's National and GWU. Dr. McDonnell conducted

trainings in public health policy, gender equity, and women's leadership and teaches coursework in Program Evaluation, Maternal and Child Health, and works with undergraduate and graduate students, medical residents, and community groups to further the exploration of methods to meet our current complex public health challenges. Dr. McDonnell is the recipient of the ASPPH Early Career in Public Health Teaching Award, ASPPH Academy of Distinguished Teachers, and the Milken Institute SPH Excellence in Teaching Award.



Jasmine L. Garland McKinney, PhD, LCMHCA, NCC, (she/her) earned a Bachelor of Arts (BA) in Sociology from North Carolina State University and a Master of Science (MS) in Counselor Education from East Carolina University – where she also earned a graduate certificate in Substance Abuse Counseling. Dr. Garland McKinney earned her Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in Counseling and Counselor Education from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro (UNCG). She is a Licensed Clinical Mental Health Counselor Associate (NC), Professional School Counselor (NC), and Nationally Certified Counselor. Dr. Garland McKinney’s clinical and scholarly efforts center on Black women’s experiences with maternal mental health, intergenerational trauma, and the relationship between Black mothers and daughters. Dr. Garland McKinney is a Postdoctoral Associate in the Community, Equity, Data, and Information Lab within the

College of Information Studies at the University of Maryland (College Park), where she continues to expand research on Black women’s maternal health experiences. Dr. Garland McKinney is a proud wife and mother of two girls, Blake and Cooper.



Adaeze Okoroajuzie is a senior program assistant with the Board on Health Care Services at the National Academies of Science, Engineering, and Medicine. Prior to joining the National Academies, she was the president of GlobeMed at Howard University, a grassroots organization that works directly with the Nancholi Youth Organization (NAYO) in Blantyre, Malawi. She is a certified birth doula who provided free doula services to young mothers in Washington, DC through the Community Doula Network. Through her content creator account “DazetheDoula” she creates awareness and educates her community on birth education. Ms. Okoroajuzie obtained her Bachelor of Health Sciences, magna cum laude, with a minor in biology and maternal child health from Howard University and she is an expected Master's of Science graduate at Georgetown University Integrative Medicine and Health Sciences program August 2024.



Octavia Smith has been in the birth work field serving as a full spectrum Doula for the last 8 years providing support predominantly to wards 7 and 8 of Washington DC. Octavia currently serves in the role of Community Birth Work Coordinator for Mamatoto Village, a non-profit organization that provides accessible support during pregnancy, birth, & postpartum and create career pathways for Black women in perinatal health & human services. Octavia works closely with the organization’s Birth Workers and Care Specialists to provide effective care and support to birthing people perinatal and postpartum.