A WORKSHOP

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NATIONAL ACADEMIES | Sciences Engineering Medicine

Advancing Diagnostic Excellence in Rural Areas

October 14 · 8:30AM – 4:30PM ET

Hosted by:

Forum on Advancing Diagnostic Excellence

National Academy of Sciences Building
2101 Constitution Ave., N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20418

NATIONAL ACADEMIES
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Advancing Diagnostic Excellence in Rural Areas: A Workshop
October 14, 2025| 8:30 AM—4:30 PM ET

The virtual webcast will be available on **October 14 at 8:30 AM ET**: webpage

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FORUM ON ADVANCING DIAGNOSTIC EXCELLENCE

Advancing Diagnostic Excellence in Rural Areas: A Workshop

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TUESDAY, OCTOBER 14, 2025—NATIONAL ACADEMY OF SCIENCES BUILDING—LECTURE ROOM

8:00 AM   **BREAKFAST—East Court**

8:30 AM   **Welcome and Opening Remarks**
Kathy McDonald, Johns Hopkins University
Saul Weingart, Tufts Medical Center
Planning Committee Co-Chairs and Forum Members, Advancing Diagnostic Excellence

Keynote Address
Meggan Grant-Nierman, Heart of the Rockies Regional Medical

9:15 AM   **Session 1: Perspectives on Advancing Diagnostic Excellence in Rural Areas**
Moderator: Kathryn McDonald, Johns Hopkins University

Patient and Clinician Perspectives
- Sue Sheridan, Patients for Patient Safety US
- Lyn Behnke, University of Michigan-Flint
- Jennifer B. McKenney, University of Kansas Medical Center

Panel Discussion/Audience Q&A

10:15 AM   **Session 2: Expanding Access and Mitigating Health Disparities in Rural Diagnosis**
Moderators: Joseph Benitez, University of Kentucky
Peiyin Hung, University of South Carolina Rural Health Research Center

Leveraging Telehealth to Improve Maternal Diagnosis in Rural Minnesota [VIRTUAL]
Johnna Nynas, Sanford Health

Expanding Access to Hospital Level Care in Rural America through Mobile Health Innovation
Emily M. D'Agostino, Duke University School of Medicine

Strategies to Improve Diagnostic Access and Accuracy in the Alaskan Frontier [VIRTUAL]
Shawn Vainio, Yukon Kuskokwim Health Corp

Panel Discussion/Audience Q&A

11:15 AM   **BREAK**

11:30 AM   **Session 3: Supporting Rural Health Care Professionals in Diagnostic Excellence**

Moderators: Meggan Grant-Nierman, Heart of the Rockies Regional Medical Center
            Pari Pandharipande, University of Pennsylvania

Incorporating Point-of-Care Strategies to Improve Primary Care Diagnosis
Mark Deutchman, University of Colorado

The Role of Physician Associates in Improving Rural Diagnosis [VIRTUAL]
Matthew Probst, University of New Mexico Office for Community Health

Utilizing Project ECHO as a Learning Framework to Support Rural Age Friendly Care
Katherine Bennett, University of Washington School of Medicine

Addressing the Primary Care Shortage in Rural, Tribal, and Underserved Oklahoma Communities
Natasha Bray, Oklahoma State University College of Osteopathic Medicine at the Cherokee Nation

Panel Discussion/Audience Q&A

12:45 PM   **LUNCH BREAK—East Court**

1:45 PM   **Session 4: Transforming Diagnosis through Innovative Rural Health Care Models**

Moderators: Helen Burstin, Council of Medical Specialty Societies
            Kia Parsi, A&M Rural and Community Health Institute

Leveraging Clinically Integrated Networks to Support High-Quality Rural Health in Texas
Paul Aslin, Texas Organization of Rural and Community Hospitals

Partnerships to Improve Maternal Health in Northeast New Mexico
Colleen Durocher, Rural OB Access and Maternal Services

Improving Access to Specialized Care through the VA National TeleOncology Program
Vida Passero, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Panel Discussion/Audience Q&A

2:45 PM   **BREAK**

3:00 PM   **Session 5: A Vision for the Future of Diagnostic Excellence in Rural Areas**

Moderator: Saul Weingart, Tufts Medical Center

Panelists:
- Kevin Stansbury, Lincoln Health
- Judy Zerzan-Thul, Washington State Health Care Authority [VIRTUAL]

- Jennifer Stoll, OCHIN
- Meggan Grant-Nierman, Heart of the Rockies Regional Medical Center
- Sue Sheridan, Patients for Patient Safety US

Panel Discussion/Audience Q&A

4:15 PM **Workshop Closing Remarks**
Kathy McDonald, Johns Hopkins University
Saul Weingart, Tufts Medical Center
Planning Committee Co-Chairs and Forum Members, Advancing Diagnostic Excellence

4:30 PM **MEETING ADJOURNS**

Advancing Diagnostic Excellence in Rural Areas: A Workshop
Statement of Task

A planning committee of the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine will organize and conduct a public workshop to explore opportunities to improve diagnosis in rural areas in the United States. Workshop participants will consider the current landscape and explore opportunities for addressing diagnostic challenges to mitigate health disparities for rural populations.

The workshop will feature invited presentations and discussions exploring strategies within rural areas such as:
- Delivery of patient-centered care that considers the diverse and complex factors contributing to health disparities, incorporation of shared decision making in the diagnostic process, and ways to improve timely communication of diagnosis;
- Strategies to reduce access barriers for rural populations, including availability of primary care and specialized services (such as maternal care, mental health, pediatric care, and chronic disease management); ways to address distance barriers; and ways to leverage community-centered approaches;
- The role of technologies and diagnostic innovations in improving diagnosis, including artificial intelligence and machine learning tools, digital health, telehealth, mobile units, remote diagnostics, and other mechanisms to routinely collect high-quality data and communicate patient information to clinicians in real time;
- Professional education and development to reduce diagnostic delays, specialized training for rural needs, utilization of digital health technologies, and ways to improve communication and interprofessional collaboration; and
- Strategies for enhancing diagnostic excellence in rural areas that can be adapted to other underserved areas.

In accordance with institutional guidelines, a designated rapporteur will prepare a proceedings—in brief of the workshop based on the presentations and discussions during the workshop. The proceedings-in brief will be subject to the National Academies review procedures prior to release.

Advancing Diagnostic Excellence in Rural Areas: A Workshop
Speaker Biographies

Paul Aslin, FACHE, has served as the Executive Director for the Texas Organization of Rural and Community Hospitals (TORCH) Clinically Integrated Network since November 2022. Prior to this role, he served in executive roles in rural hospitals in Texas since 2011. Paul is a Fellow with the American College of Healthcare Executives and 2011 winner of the Richard J Stull Student Essay Competition in Healthcare Management (Pre ChatGPT) in the graduate division. He earned his Master's in Healthcare Innovation from Ari-zona State University and his Masters in Healthcare Administration from the University of Texas at Arlington.

Lyn M. Behnke, DNP, MSN, BS in Health Care Administration, Diploma Nurse, Certified in Family Practice, Psyche Mental Health, and Heart Failure Fellow of AACVPR, Past Chair of WomenHeart, the National Coalition of Women with Heart Disease, a WomenHeart Champion, has a long and varied career as a primary care provider, a critical care nurse, a family practice and a psychiatric nurse practitioner, a cardiovascular nurse practitioner, an assistant professor, and a researcher with over 50 publications and invited presentations in the past ten years. Dr. Behnke serves as a rural health equity consultant for Saginaw Valley State University in Saginaw, MI, and is faculty at the University of Michigan – Flint. Dr. Behnke is also active on the community level, serving on the Northeast Michigan Community Service Agency Governing Board for several years. She is a member of AHA, ACC, AAHFN, OBOS, MNA, AAHCM, and is committed to facilitating change in rural communities to promote the eradication of poverty, the enhancement of education on both a micro and macro perspective. With 47 years of experience in nursing, she understands that it takes much more than medication to facilitate health and healing. She also understands that prevention of disease is much more cost effective than the treatment of disease.

Katherine A. Bennett, M.D., FACP, is an Associate Professor of Medicine and Program Director for the Geriatric Medicine Fellowship in the University of Washington Division of Gerontology and Geriatric Medicine. She is the Director of Education of the Northwest Geriatrics Workforce Enhancement Center funded by the Health Services and Research Administration (HRSA). Since 2016 she has served as the founding medical director of UW's regional Project ECHO-Geriatrics and has led efforts to support this program's adaptation at other institutions including testifying before the U.S. Senate. She is a previous recipient of the Geriatric Academic Career Award (GACA) through HRSA with a focus on utilizing and evaluating Project ECHO for Interprofessional Age-Friendly Geriatrics Education. She is on the Board of the National Association for Geriatrics Education (NAGE) and was President of NAGE from 2019-20. She also serves on the board of the Association for Directors of Geriatrics Academic Programs. She received her medical degree from The Ohio State University College of Medicine and completed her Internal Medicine and Geriatric Medicine Fellowships at the University of Washington. She practices at Harborview Medical Center in the Senior Care Clinic, on the inpatient geriatrics and general medicine services, and has practiced in the post-acute care setting.

Natasha N. Bray, D.O., MSEd, FACOI, FACP, FNAOME, serves as Dean of the OSU College of Osteopathic Medicine at the Cherokee Nation and as Associate Dean for Accreditation at OSU Center for Health Sciences. She previously held leadership roles in undergraduate and graduate medical education program development. Her professional expertise includes internal medicine, addiction medicine, medical education, and accreditation, with a focus on strengthening the physician workforce in rural and underserved communities. She has contributed to national committees, published research in medical education, and guided innovative programs to expand access to care. In 2025, she became the first osteopathic physician to chair the Board of the National Resident Matching Program. She has been recognized with multiple national awards for service to medicine and medical education. Dr. Bray earned her DO degree from OSU-COM, completed residency at Cambridge Health Alliance/Harvard Affiliated Hospital, and holds a master's in medical education.

Emily M. D'Agostino, DPH, MS, MEd, MA, is an Associate Professor of Orthopaedics, Duke University School of Medicine, Department of Population Health Sciences, and Director of Community-Engaged Research Practice. She holds over 20 years of experience working directly in school and park settings to develop innovative, community-engaged strategies targeting physical activity, obesity, fitness, and mental health. Dr. D'Agostino serves as principal investigator on the ARPA-H PARADIGM program to deliver advanced hospital-level care to rural areas, Youth Empowered Self-Care (YES) and Going Places studies to promote youth well-being and physical activity in close collaboration with Parks and Recreation. She also serves as co-principal investigator on the You & Me: Test and Treat study and You and Me Healthy Registry program, and co-investigator on the Rapid Acceleration of Diagnostics-Underserved Populations (RADx-UP) program that coordinates 143 research projects and develops community-engaged research capacity nationally. She is the Associate Editor of Childhood Obesity, and provides research oversight for the Miami-Dade County Department of Parks, Recreation and Open Spaces, the third largest county park system in the nation, and the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene's NYC Fitnessgram program, which includes population-level fitness surveillance for over 900,000 participants annually. Dr. D'Agostino has authored >90 peer-reviewed publications. She obtained her doctorate in epidemiology at the City University of New York, Graduate School of Public Health and Health Policy in 2016.

Mark Deutchman, M.D., is a Family Medicine physician with experience in both rural practice and in academic practice, teaching, research and program development. He is founding director of the Rural Program at the University of Colorado School of Medicine which attracts, admits and supports students interested in future rural practice, particularly primary care. He also serves as Associate Dean for Rural Health. His primary faculty appointment is in the Department of Family Medicine and has additional faculty appointments in the School of Public Health and in the School of Dental Medicine. His primary professional work is concerned with rural healthcare professional workforce development, scope and quality of rural healthcare, access to healthcare for rural people including primary care, maternity care and with use of technology. He directs a statewide rural healthcare workforce initiative encompassing training programs in medicine, dentistry, public health, nursing and behavioral health. He is a member of the American Academy of Family Physicians and other professional groups and has received numerous local, state and national teaching and program development awards. He graduated from The Ohio State University with B.S. and M.D. degrees and completed Family Medicine residency in Spokane, Washington before entering rural practice.

Colleen Durocher, MA is the Rural OB Access & Maternal Services (ROAMS) Executive Director in rural Northeast New Mexico. Colleen has over 30 years of experience creating and managing maternal and youth programs in: Nepal, India, North Carolina, the sovereign nation of Taos Pablo, and Taos New Mexico where she currently resides. Colleen has a Bachelor of Science degree from the University of Michigan, and a Master of Arts degree from Antioch University in Yellow Springs, Ohio.

Jennifer B. McKenney, M.D., FAAFP is a family physician in her hometown of Fredonia, Kansas, a community of approximately 2,200 people. She has owned and managed her practice Fredonia Family Care alongside her father and other great colleagues since 2009. McKenney was named the 2021 Rural Health Practitioner of the Year by the National Rural Health Association and received the "Early Career Achievement Award" by the University of Kansas School of Medicine in 2021. She earned her medical degree at the KU School of Medicine in Kansas City and Wichita and completed her residency at Via Christi Family Medicine Residency in Wichita. McKenney is currently the Associate Dean for Rural Medical Education for the KU School of Medicine. She serves as the Wilson County health officer and is co-chair of the statewide Health Officers of Kansas group. McKenney was a member of the USD 484 school board for 9 years, serving as the president for two years. She is a past President of the Kansas Academy of Family Physicians and was the resident member of the AAFP National Board of Directors. She is the Vice Chair for the Kansas Health Foundation and is on the medical staff at Fredonia Regional Hospital, a 25-bed critical access hospital. She has made numerous appearances on national and local news covering COVID-19 and rural health.

Tom Morris, MPA, serves as the Associate Administrator for Rural Health Policy in the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). In that role, Tom oversees the work of the Federal Office of Rural Health Policy, which is charged with advising the HHS Secretary on rural health issues. The Office, which has an annual budget of $364 million, administers a range of research and capacity-building grant programs that serve rural communities. He has an undergraduate degree in journalism from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and a master's in public administration with a concentration in community health from East Carolina University. He also earned a Certificate in Public Leadership from the Brookings Institution in 2008.

Johnna Nynas, M.D., is a board-certified obstetrician-gynecologist affiliated with Sanford Health of Northern Minnesota, practicing in Bemidji, Minnesota, and providing outreach care at Red Lake (Indian Health Service). She helped lead Sanford Health's participation in a Rural Maternity and Obstetric Management Strategies (RMOMS) grant from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, which supports telehealth and maternal care access across rural and tribal communities in northern Minnesota. Her work focuses on rural maternal and obstetric care, telehealth in prenatal and postnatal services, and expanding equitable access to quality care for underserved populations. In 2024, Dr. Nynas was recognized by CNN as a "Champion for Change" for her efforts to expand telehealth access in rural pregnancy care. She is a member of the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists and the American Medical Association. Dr. Nynas earned her M.D. from the University of Minnesota (Duluth/Minneapolis) and completed her obstetrics-gynecology residency at St. Joseph Mercy Hospital in Ann Arbor, Michigan.

Vida Passero, M.D., MBA, is a board-certified hematology/oncology physician who is Chief Medical Officer of National TeleOncology. Her clinical hematology/oncology practice is at VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System. She is a Clinical Associate Professor of Medicine at the University of Pittsburgh and continues in her role as Associate Hematology/Oncology Fellowship Program Director at University of Pittsburgh Medical Center. Her focus is on building national teams and sustaining strategically a hematology/oncology service to ensure all patients across the nation have access to comprehensive, subspecialized cancer care including TeleChemotherapy whether they are at a rural healthcare facility and/or at home. With grant support in 2016, her team at VA Pittsburgh launched the Virtual Cancer Care Clinic using telehealth and remote infusion to provide care to Veterans in rural Pennsylvania. In 2023, Dr. Passero received the Telehealth Champion: Advancing Access to Virtual Care Award from the American Telemedicine Association. Dr. Passero received her BA at Georgetown University, her MD at West Virginia University, and her MBA from Carlow University. She completed her Internal Medicine resident and chief resident training in Internal Medicine and Hematology/Oncology fellowship training at University of Pittsburgh Medical Center.

Matthew Probst, PA, is a Physician Associate and Primary Care Provider at Sunrise Medical Clinic in Las Vegas, New Mexico. He is also Director of Rural Engagement for the University of New Mexico Office for Community Health. He graduated from the UNM PA Program in 2003. In 2019 he was the American Academy of Physician Assistants PA of the Year and recipient of the Primary Care Community Leadership Award and the National Association of Rural Mental Health Schumacher Award for Excellence in Clinical Service. In 2020, U.S. Senator Martin Heinrich named him a Hometown Hero, and New Mexico Magazine recognized him as a True Hero for COVID-19 response. In 2021, Mr. Probst was the New Mexico Alliance of School-Based Health Center Champion and the National Organization of State Rural Health Offices Community Star. Matt currently serves on the National Advisory Committee on Rural Health and Human Services and the New Mexico Primary Care Council. Inventor of the New Mexico Hub and Spoke rural healthcare delivery system he is passionate about expanding access to care for rural and underserved people.

Sue Sheridan, MIM, MBA, DHL, is President and CEO of Patients for Patient Safety US. She was a member of the Patient Safety Working Group of the President's Executive Council. She has served as Director of Patient Engagement for the Society to Improve Diagnosis in Medicine, Advisor to the Centers of Medicare and Medicaid Services, the Director of Patient Engagement for the Patient Centered Outcomes Research Institute and led the Patients for Patient Safety program at the World Health Organization. Sheridan had previously spent 10 years in patient advocacy inspired by adverse family experiences in the healthcare system. In 2009, Sheridan was named to Modern Healthcare's list of Top 25 Women in Healthcare as well as Modern Healthcare's 100 Most Powerful People in Healthcare. In 2022 Sheridan was awarded the Mark L. Graber Diagnostic Quality Award.

Kevin Stansbury, MS, JD, FACHE, serves as the CEO at Lincoln Health in Hugo, CO. Kevin has over 40 years in healthcare, primarily in community hospitals. His work has taken him not only across the United States but all over the globe. He has served in roles in hospital administration, strategic planning, healthcare project planning and service in emerging economies. He is a past Chair of the Colorado Hospital Association Board of Trustees. He has also served on a variety of State and National task forces supporting the cause of rural health, including the National Rural Health Association Rural Health Policy Congress. Mr. Stansbury is a founding member of the Eastern Plains Health Consortium, and the founding member of the Colorado Rural Futures project. He received his BS in Business Administration from the University of Wyoming; MS in Health Services Administration from Central Michigan University and he received his JD with honors from the University of Wyoming College of Law.

Jennifer Stoll serves as the Chief External Affairs Officer for OCHIN, a national nonprofit health information technology and research organization that provides solutions, expertise, clinical insights, and advanced technology support to a diverse range of healthcare providers including community health centers, critical access hospitals, rural hospitals, tribal nations, and public health. A national expert at the crossroads of health technology, policy, advocacy, and development, Jennifer leads a comprehensive team that advocates for OCHIN members across the country, working strategically to improve access to care in rural and under resourced communities through targeted policy initiatives and stakeholder engagement. Her extensive experience in rural healthcare advocacy has established her as a powerful champion for rural health initiatives, enabling her to drive meaningful policy changes that directly address the unique barriers to care faced by these communities. Jennifer holds degrees from the Stanford University Graduate School of Business and the University of Connecticut and chairs and serves on various national boards and committees.

Shawn Vainio, M.D., FAAFP, is a 2003 graduate of SUNY Buffalo School of Medicine and Biomedical Sciences. He completed his residency at the University of Utah in Family Medicine and is currently practicing in Bethel, Alaska at the Yukon Kuskokwim Health Corporation. He has previously worked in multiple rural communities in Alaska, Washington and Oregon and spent a winter season at Palmer Station Antarctica. He has worked on and led medical expeditions with the Himalayan Health Exchange for the past 23 years, delivering healthcare to the Tibetan refugee and Ancient Tribal populations of the Indian Transhimalaya. For his work, he received the 2023 American Academy of Family Physicians Humanitarian Award.

Judy Zerzan-Thul, M.D., is the Chief Medical Officer at Washington State Health Care Authority, Co-Chair of the Health Care Payment Learning and Action Network Executive Forum, and a general internal medicine physician. She helps administer the state's Medicaid program and Employee and Retiree Benefit program. She works to support primary care, promote the innovative use of data, drive equitable health outcomes and lower the total cost of care. Prior to her role as the CMO for Washington State, Dr. Zerzan-Thul was the Chief Medical Officer at the Colorado Department of Health Care Policy and Financing. Both Washington and Colorado have large rural and frontier areas that she has worked to improve health care access and quality. Dr. Zerzan-Thul holds a Doctor of Medicine from Oregon Health and Science University and received a Master of Public Health in Health Policy and Administration from the University of North Carolina.

Advancing Diagnostic Excellence in Rural Areas: A Workshop Planning Committee Biographies

Kathryn (Kathy) McDonald, Ph.D., MM, (Co-Chair), is the Bloomberg Distinguished Professor of Health Systems, Quality and Safety at Johns Hopkins University. She holds primary appointments in the School of Nursing and the School of Medicine (General Internal Medicine), as well as academic affiliations in business, public health and engineering. She is co-director of the Armstrong Institute Center for Diagnostic Excellence at the Armstrong Institute for Patient Safety and Quality. She serves on the Advisory Committee of the Center for Equity in Aging at Johns Hopkins School of Nursing. Previously, she was the founding executive director of the Center for Primary Care and Outcomes Research at Stanford University's School of Medicine, and executive director of the Center for Health Policy at the Freeman Spogli Institute for International Studies. Her interdisciplinary scholarship aims to improve health care delivery, and relies on close partnerships with patients, frontline clinical teams, and delivery system leaders. Influential research products include over 100 evidence-based national quality, prevention and safety measures, and seminal publications on coordination of care, patient safety and quality improvement strategies, and human-centered design approaches to implementation science. In the diagnostic excellence domain, her research team and close collaborations include projects related to patient reported measures, diagnostic disparities solutions for diagnostic equity, narrative elicitation methods to deepen understanding of patient and care partner experiences, and systems-level approaches to evaluating artificial intelligence applications for screening, risk prediction, and diagnosis. She has served as president of the Society for Medical Decision Making, advisory chair for the Relational Coordination Collaborative, and founding chair of the Patient Engagement Committee of the Society to Improve Diagnosis in Medicine. She has also served as a member on several National Academies Committees – Child Health and Healthcare Measures, Improving Diagnosis and Reducing Diagnostic Errors — that grappled with challenges of measuring and improving quality, equity and health. She currently serves as a member of the National Academies Forum on Advancing Diagnostic Excellence. Dr. McDonald values her early career experiences in semiconductor processing, technology optimization, business development, and new product development, all of which reflect her desire to move knowledge into action. She holds a PhD in health policy with an emphasis on organizations and management from UC Berkeley, an MBA from Northwestern University's Kellogg School of Management, and a BS in chemical engineering from Stanford University.

Saul N. Weingart, M.D., Ph.D., (Co-Chair), is Professor of Medicine at Tufts University School of Medicine and Chief of the Division of General Internal Medicine at Tufts Medical Center. He served previously as Vice President for Quality Improvement and Patient Safety at the Dana-Farber Cancer Institute, as Chief Medical Officer and Senior Vice President of Medical Affairs at Tufts Medical Center, and as the President of Rhode Island and Hasbro Children's Hospital. Dr. Weingart holds a doctorate in public policy from Harvard and an MD degree from the University of Rochester. Dr. Weingart's research examines patient safety in primary and specialty care, patient engagement, and diagnostic errors. A practicing general internist, Dr. Weingart was a member of the board of directors of the National Patient Safety Foundation and the recipient of the 2012 John M. Eisenberg individual achievement award in quality and patient safety.

Joseph Benitez, Ph.D., is Assistant Professor of Public Policy in the Martin School of Public Policy and Administration at the University of Kentucky. In addition to his primary appointment in the Martin School, he has a courtesy appointment in the Department of Economics, and he is a faculty affiliate of University of Kentucky's Center for Poverty Research and the Center for Health, Engagement, and Transformation. Dr. Benitez is a health economist who studies Medicaid policy and Medicaid program design. In particular, he investigates the viability of Medicaid as a safety net program for households experiencing transitional poverty and healthcare access within and across Medicaid Managed Care organization. He has previously served as a visiting scholar at the American Board of Family Medicine as well as non-residential fellow with Kaiser Family Foundation's Program on Medicaid and the Uninsured. He holds a PhD in Health Policy from the University of Illinois Chicago.

Helen Burstin, M.D., MPH, MACP, is the Executive Vice President and Chief Executive Officer of the Council of Medical Specialty Societies (CMSS) which represents 45-member specialty societies with collective membership of almost 800,000 U.S. physician members. CMSS works to support and strengthen specialty societies and catalyzes improvement through convening, collaboration, collective voice and action. CMSS provides a proactive platform to assess and address emerging and critical issues across specialty societies that influence the future of healthcare and the patients we serve. Dr. Burstin formerly served as Chief Scientific Officer of The National Quality Forum (NQF). Prior to joining NQF, Dr. Burstin was the Director of the Center for Primary Care, Prevention, and Clinical Partnerships at the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ). Prior to joining AHRQ, Dr. Burstin was Director of Quality Measurement at Brigham and Women's Hospital and Assistant Professor at Harvard Medical School. Dr. Burstin is the author of more than 100 articles and book chapters on quality, safety and disparities. She currently serves on the boards of AcademyHealth and the Society to Improve Diagnosis in Medicine. Dr. Burstin is a graduate of the State University of New York at Upstate College of Medicine and the Harvard School of Public Health. She completed a residency in primary care internal medicine at Boston City Hospital and a fellowship in General Internal Medicine and Health Services Research at Brigham and Women's Hospital and Harvard Medical School. She is a Clinical Professor of Medicine at George Washington University School of Medicine and Professorial Lecturer in the Department of Health Policy at George Washington University School of Public Health.

Meggan Grant-Nierman, D.O., MBA, MHCDS, is a primary care physician who practices full spectrum family medicine in the rural community of Salida, Colorado. She graduated in 2008 with a dual degree in Doctor of Osteopathic Medicine and Master of Business Administration from Kansas City University of Medicine and Biosciences and Rockhurst University and then completed family medicine residency and sports medicine fellowship at Via Christi in Wichita, Kansas. She joined First Street Family Health in 2012 as a family medicine obstetrics provider. She has experience as a small independent practice physician owner and her practice was an early adopter of the value based payment initiatives including CPCI, CPC+, PCF as well as TCPI and MSSP/ACO participation. She served one term on the National Advisory committee for Rural Health and Human Services. Her passion for rural health care intersects with interest in exploring various care delivery models and payment incentives. That interest is what led her to enroll in the Masters in Health Care Delivery Sciences program at Dartmouth in 2022. In 2023 she began employment at the Salida Health Center under Heart of the Rockies Regional Medical Center and recently launched a direct primary care practice in summer 2025.

Peiyin Hung, Ph.D., MS, is an Associate Professor in Health Services Policy and Management and Co-Director of the Rural Health Research Center at the University of South Carolina (USC). She holds a PhD in Health Services Research from the University of Minnesota, an MSPH from Emory University, and a bachelor's degree in healthcare management from Chung-Shan Medical University in Taiwan, with postdoctoral training at Yale University. Dr. Hung's research focuses on rural health equity, perinatal health, and healthcare access and quality. She has led multiple federally-funded studies on rural perinatal care, telehealth, and chronic pain management. Her work leverages big data analytics, geospatial methods, and mixed-methods approaches to inform health policy and implementation science. She has published >100 peer-reviewed articles, presented at more than 100 national and international conferences, and been featured in over 150 media outlets. She was named the 2025 Outstanding Researcher of the Year by the National Rural Health Association and a 2023 USC Breakthrough Research Star, serving on federal committee, including Chair of CMS's Rural Obstetric Readiness Workgroup and membership on the Health Equity Advisory Committee for the HRSA's Rural Maternity and Obstetrics Management Strategies Program.

Pari Pandharipande, M.D., MPH, is Chair of Radiology at the University of Pennsylvania Perelman School of Medicine. She is a practicing abdominal radiologist, and she also oversees an NIH-funded outcomes research program centered in cancer modeling, risk analysis, and cost-effectiveness analysis, which broadly seeks to quantify the benefits, risks, and costs of diagnostic and therapeutic interventions for reducing the burden of cancer. She serves as a board member of the Radiological Society of North America, and as an Advisory Board member of the Harvey L. Neiman Health Policy Institute of the American College of Radiology. She is a standing member of the NIH ODHS Study Section, serves on multiple journal editorial boards, and has closely mentored 20+ individuals in radiology and health outcomes research. She obtained her undergraduate degree (BA) from Cornell University (1994), and her MD from Weill Cornell University Medical College (1998). She completed her Radiology Residency at NYU (2004), and fellowship in Abdominal Imaging and Cancer Outcomes Research at Massachusetts General Hospital (2006). During fellowship, she also completed an MPH degree at the Harvard T. H. Chan School of Public Health (2005). Her career goal is to ensure that every patient's encounter with imaging adds value to their care.

Kia Parsi, M.D., is currently the Executive Director of the A&M Rural and Community Health Institute which serves in a consultative role with hospitals and communities across the state of Texas to facilitate best practices in patient safety, enhanced quality of care, and physician excellence. The Institute works with hospitals in peer review, quality improvement, utilization management, and staff education. Prior to corning to the Institute, Dr. Parsi served as Chief Medical Officer for St. Joseph Health, an integrated health care system that is part of CommonSpirit Health. The St. Joseph Market includes 3 Critical Access Hospitals, 2 acute care hospitals, 2 nursing homes (one in a rural site), and over 30 ambulatory clinics, with a medical group of over 160 physicians working in both rural and suburban environments. In 2010, Dr. Parsi successfully led the formation of a regional Clinically Integrated Network that included a Medicare Shared Savings ACO and several commercial Value-Based Care contracts. This CIN included participation from an urban referral hospital and several Critical Access Hospitals. Dr. Parsi has over 27 years of experience in the rural setting including full clinical practice of outpatient, inpatient, post-acute, and hospice care. In his administrative roles as both Chief Executive Officer and Chief Medical Officer, Dr. Parsi has led multiple new successful partnerships between rural communities and larger health care systems. Due to his breadth of experience, Dr. Parsi has the unique perspective of being involved as an administrator representing a rural health care institution as well as being part of a larger health care organization. Dr. Parsi is also an Associate Professor and Executive Director for Rural Medicine at the Texas A&M School of Medicine. He graduated with Honors from the University of Texas at Austin in 1991 and Baylor College of Medicine in 1995 as an Alpha Omega Alpha member.

Advancing Diagnostic Excellence in Rural Areas: A Workshop
Relevant Readings and Resources

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FORUM ON ADVANCING DIAGNOSTIC EXCELLENCE

Diagnostic errors are the most common cause of medical errors reported by patients, accounting for nearly 60 percent of all errors and an estimated 40,000-80,000 deaths per year. The 2015 Institute of Medicine consensus report, *Improving Diagnosis in Health Care*, found that diagnostic errors are a persistent and underappreciated quality and safety challenge throughout all settings of health care. The study committee estimated that every person is likely to experience a diagnostic error in their lifetime, sometimes with devastating consequences, and concluded that improving diagnosis is "not only possible, but also represents a moral, professional, and public health imperative." To improve the diagnostic process, the committee called for a widespread commitment from health care professionals, health care organizations, patients and their families, researchers, and policy makers.

In 2018, the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation announced the Diagnostic Excellence Initiative, with the aim of reducing harm from diagnostic errors, improving health outcomes, and saving lives. The initiative included a workshop series on Advancing Diagnostic Excellence hosted by the National Academies. The six workshops in the series focused on sepsis, acute cardiovascular events, cancer, diagnostic lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic, diagnosis for older adults, and diagnosis in maternal health care.

To provide a more sustained platform for this work, while engaging a broader range of funders and stakeholders, the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine established a **Forum on Advancing Diagnostic Excellence** in 2023 to provide a structured environment and neutral venue to discuss data, policies, practices, and systems that affect the quality of diagnosis in health care. The Forum fosters an ongoing dialogue on a range of topics to examine the current scientific landscape and research opportunities for improving diagnosis within the U.S. health care system, with emphasis on conditions and populations with the greatest risk of harm from diagnostic errors.

Upcoming Public Events and Activities

Advancing Diagnosis of Rare Diseases: A Webinar
November 6, 2025, Virtual
This public webinar will explore ways to improve rare disease diagnosis as well as the patient journey towards a timely and accurate diagnosis.

Engaging Patients to Advance Diagnostic Excellence: A Workshop
March 2, 2026, Washington, D.C.
A National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine planning committee will organize and host a hybrid public workshop to explore opportunities to facilitate effective patient engagement to improve diagnosis in the U.S. health care system.

Past Public Events and Activities

Advancing Health Care Professional Education and Training in Diagnostic Excellence: A Workshop
April 3, 2025, Irvine, CA.
A National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine planning committee, in collaboration with the Global Forum on Innovation in Health Professional Education, hosted a hybrid public workshop to explore opportunities to strengthen health care professional education and training in the diagnostic process and reduce the potential for diagnostic errors.

- Access the workshop recording [here](#).
- Read the [proceedings-in brief](#).

Executive Leadership Strategies to Drive Diagnostic Excellence: A Webinar
December 11, 2024, Virtual
This public webinar explored select strategies undertaken by leaders in the U.S. health care system to drive diagnostic excellence in their organizations.
- Access the webinar recording [here](#).

Advancing Equity in Diagnostic Excellence to Reduce Health Disparities: A Workshop
September 23-24, 2024, Washington, D.C.
A National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine planning committee, in collaboration with the Roundtable on the Promotion of Health Equity, hosted a hybrid public 1.5-day workshop examining equity in access to high-quality diagnosis to reduce health disparities.
- Access the workshop recording [here](#).
- Read the [proceedings-in brief](#).

Diagnosis in the Era of Digital Health and Artificial Intelligence: A Workshop
July 25, 2024, Washington, D.C.
This hybrid public workshop examined the opportunities and challenges for improving diagnosis in the era of digital health and artificial intelligence.
- Access the workshop recording [here](#).
- Read the [proceedings-in brief](#) and interactive [overview](#).

FORUM MEMBERSHIP

Andrew Bindman, Kaiser Permanente (Chair)
Helen Burstin, Council of Medical Specialty Societies (Representing the Mont Fund)
Nicole Everline Alexander-Scott, Brown University
Amit Agrawal, Danaher
Daniel K. Cassavar, The Doctors Company
Linda N. Geng, Stanford University
Cristina Maria Gonzalez, New York University Grossman School of Medicine
Gene Elizabeth Harkless, University of New Hampshire (Representing AANP)
Donald Karcher, George Washington University Medical Center (Representing CAP)
Salahuddin Kazi, University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center (Representing ABIM)
David Larson, Stanford University (Representing ACR)
Kathryn McDonald, Johns Hopkins University
Kristen Elizabeth Miller, MedStar Health
Jennifer Orozco-Kolb, American Academy of Physician Associates
Pari Pandharipande, University of Pennsylvania (Representing RSNA)
Cheryl Phillips, The John A. Hartford Foundation
Sumant Ranji, University of California, San Francisco (Representing the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation)
Thomas Sequist, Harvard Medical School, Mass General Brigham
Susan Sheridan, Patients for Patient Safety US
Saul Weingart, Tufts Medical Center