

Advancing Diagnostic Excellence in Rural Areas: A Workshop

Committee

Kathryn M. McDonald

Co-Chair

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 on 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 Weingart

Co-Chair

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

Member

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

Member

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

Member

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 in the summer of 2025 she will be launching a direct primary care practice.

Peiyin Hung

Member

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

Member

Pari Pandharipande, M.D., MPH, (as of June 1, 2025) will be the 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

Member

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 coming 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.

Jennifer Flaubert

Staff Officer