

Pediatric Health Equity Collaborative (PHEC) Participant Bios



Nargis Raza Ali, MSN, RN

*Health Equity Manager
Children's Health*

Nargis Ali is a Registered Nurse who works at Children's Health as the Health Equity Manager. She graduated from the University of Texas at Arlington in December 2012 with a Bachelor of Science in Nursing and has been a nurse since January 2013. She has a background in Emergency Room Nursing, Psychiatric Nursing and Ambulatory Nursing- Gastroenterology Clinic. She was a Pediatric Gastroenterology Clinic Nurse at Children's Health for 5 years until she moved into her new role in May 2019. She is a member of the American Academy of Ambulatory Nursing.

She obtained her Master of Science in Nursing at the University of Texas at El Paso with a focus in Nursing Education in December of 2018. She is excited to be a part of the Health Equity world and a new member of PHEC!



Amita Bey, MPH

*Program Director, Office of Inclusion and Health Equity
Monroe Carell Jr. Children's Hospital at Vanderbilt*

Amita Bey is the Program Director for Implementation and Evaluation in the Office of Inclusion and Health Equity (OIHE) at the Monroe Carell Jr. Children's Hospital at Vanderbilt. Her extensive experience includes domestic and international multi-institutional clinical research, assessment of health disparities in the treatment of pediatric chronic diseases, and global health program evaluation. As part of her current role, she facilitates unconscious bias, cultural competency, and civil behavior in the workplace training for Vanderbilt University Medical Center (VUMC) faculty and staff. Prior to her current position, she served as the Program Director for the VUMC Surgical Outcomes Center for Kids (SOCKs) at Vanderbilt Children's Hospital. She was responsible for developing a training program and comprehensive research curriculum for medical students and undergraduate trainees. She has a Bachelor of Science in biology from Tuskegee University, and a Master's in Public Health in global studies with a focus in epidemiology from the University of Alabama at Birmingham. She is currently pursuing a doctoral degree in education from Lipscomb University. Prior to coming to Vanderbilt, she served as an epidemiologist in immunization services at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).



Marshaun Butler, MHA

*Vice President for Clinical Support Service
Children's Mercy Hospital Kansas*

Marshaun is Vice President for Clinical Support Services and Children's Mercy Hospital Kansas, where she is responsible for overseeing facility operations and leading program development and implementation. She also has direct responsibility for psychosocial services, therapy (physical, occupational and speech therapies) and audiology services across the enterprise. Additionally, she serves at the system's Chief Diversity Officer. In this role, Marshaun identifies priorities and executes diversity related initiatives to harness and promote an inclusive environment for patients, staff and visitors. She works to ensure all are welcome whereby establishing a culture where patients are free to heal, and staff are comfortable to thrive. Marshaun has been active in health care for over 20 years with extensive leadership, strategic planning and business development experience.

Marshaun Butler graduated from Fisk University in Nashville, Tennessee with a Bachelor's Degree in Business Management and a Minor in Health Care Administration. Her Master's Degree in Health Services Administration is from the University of Kansas.

She is active in her community serving on the Board of Directors for: Health Forward Foundation (Vice President), Johnson County Community College Foundation (Vice President), Mattie Rhodes (President) and Swope Ridge Geriatric Center (Vice Chair), Overland Park Chamber (Past-member), Overland Park Economic Development Council (Past-Chair).

She is a member of American College of Health Care Executives, National Association of Health Services Executives and Executive Women's Leadership Council of the Greater Kansas City Chamber. Passionate about leadership, Marshaun has also participated in the Overland Park Chamber's Leadership Overland Park program and Greater Kansas City Chamber of Commerce's Centurions Leadership program. Providing service through sisterhood, she is an influential member of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc. and the Greater Kansas City (MO) Chapter of Links, Inc.

Honors and awards include 435 Magazine - Power Issue - Power People of Kansas City 2017, Black Achiever of the Year 2017, Kansas City Chamber's Athena Young Professional Award 2014, Who's Who in Black Kansas City 2013, Black Achievers Society of Kansas City (immediate past President).

Marshaun enjoys spending time with her family, scrapbooking, mentoring young adults and early careerists, and volunteering in her community.



LaVone Caldwell, MSW

*Director of Health Equity
Nationwide Children's Hospital*

LaVone has over 30 years' experience as a Clinical Social Worker in the areas of HIV/AIDS, hematology/oncology, neonatology; and child abuse/neglect. She has been employed at Nationwide Children's Hospital for over 23 years in various social work and leadership roles. LaVone was hired in September 2013 to develop a new department focused on eliminating health disparities throughout Children's Hospital. Her primary responsibilities include defining and developing a health equity vision and a strategic plan; leading, participating in and conducting activities related to addressing health disparities in our target communities; and creating methods, tools, resources and models that leads to equal clinical outcomes for all pediatric patients.



John D. Cowden, MD, MPH

*Professor of Pediatrics
Culture and Language Coaching Program Director
Health Equity Integration Project Lead
Children's Mercy Kansas City*

Dr. Cowden is a Professor of Pediatrics at Children's Mercy Kansas City, where he serves as the Health Equity Integration Program Lead and Director of the Culture and Language Coaching Program. Dr. Cowden's research and quality improvement interests include provider-patient communication, immigrant health care, diversity of research subjects, and access to health care for minorities, specifically those who do not speak English.

Dr. Cowden serves on the Health Equity leadership team for the Children's Hospitals Solutions for Patient Safety and is a member of the Pediatric Health Equity Collaborative.

Dr. Cowden graduated from Yale University School of Medicine (MD) and the University of Washington School of Public Health (MPH). He completed pediatric residency at Seattle Children's Hospital and completed the Disparities Leadership Program at the Disparities Solutions Center.



Kirk Dabney, MD, MHDS

*Co-Director Cerebral Palsy Program
Clinical Director, Office of Health Equity and Inclusion
Assistant Professor of Orthopedic Surgery,
Pediatric Orthopedic Surgeon
Nemours/Alfred I. DuPont Hospital for Children*

Kirk Dabney is an assistant professor of Orthopedic Surgery in the Department of Pediatric Orthopedic Surgery at the Nemours Alfred I. duPont hospital for Children. He received his Bachelor's in Arts degree (AB) from Princeton University. While at Princeton, he was captain of the Princeton wrestling team

and earned All-Ivy status in wrestling. Dr. Dabney earned a Doctorate in Medicine (M.D.) from Thomas Jefferson University Medical College, and a Master's in Healthcare Delivery Science from Dartmouth College. His clinical responsibilities include providing orthopedic care to children from birth through twenty-one with sub-specialization including the care of children with cerebral palsy and other neuromuscular diseases, and children with orthopedic problems as a result of hematologic disorders (sickle cell disease and hemophilia). Dr. Dabney co-directs the Cerebral Palsy Division/program which is one of the largest in the country. Dabney holds his primary academic appointment as Assistant Professor of Orthopedic surgery at Thomas Jefferson University College of Medicine and is also Clinical Assistant Professor of Orthopedic Surgery at Georgetown University College of Medicine. He is a Fellow of the American Academy of Orthopedic Surgeons. He is board certified by the American Board of Orthopedic Surgeons. Administratively, he is an active member of the Strategy Council at the Nemours DuPont Hospital for Children and has the role of leading the Nemours Office of Health Equity and Inclusion as its Clinical Director. Recently, Dr. Dabney helped to start the Pediatric Health Equity Collaborative, a consortium of Pediatric hospitals in the United States and Canada that champion the efforts of Health Equity. Dr. Dabney has also been involved with the diversity mentorship program within the American Academy of Orthopedic Surgeons and is actively involved in his community as a mentor and tutor in math for young African-American males. His greatest accomplishment is his marriage of 27 years to Monica and his two adult children, Christian and Courtney.



Gabriela Flores, MBM
Director, Office of Equity and Diversity
Children's Mercy Hospital

Gabriela Flores has over seventeen years of experience working in the area of human services, specifically with refugee and immigrant populations in the Kansas City metropolitan area. Her area of emphasis has been in language access, diversity and health equity. Ms. Flores currently serves as the Director for the Office of Equity and Diversity at Children's Mercy Hospitals and Clinics. Her role is to create and implement an organizational framework focusing on health equity, diversity and inclusion, which includes strategies specifically related to community engagement.



Jane Goleman, MD, MDiv, D.Min

*Clinical Associate Professor, OSU College of Medicine
Nationwide Children's Hospital*

M. Jane Goleman, MD, MDiv, D.Min, is a member of the Section of Ambulatory Pediatrics at Nationwide Children's Hospital and a Clinical Associate Professor of Pediatrics at The Ohio State University College of Medicine. Dr. Goleman's clinical interest is in primary care, ADHD, and doctor-patient communication and its impact on health outcomes. She is the medical lead for the Office of Health Equity at NCH, and a founding member of the Pediatric Health Equity Collaborative. She leads quality improvement teams addressing HPV vaccine rates, infant mortality due to unsafe sleep, and tobacco cessation.



Nina Jain-Sheehan

*Quality and Patient Safety Specialist
Niagara Health*

Nina Jain-Sheehan is a Quality and Patient Safety Specialist (QPSS) that has over 15 years of experience working in public health. She recently started at Niagara Health and is bringing her skills and experience working with marginalized populations and promoting health equity to the hospital setting. In her role as a QPSS she is responsible for quality improvement initiatives aimed at improving the outcomes of our patients. Nina's portfolio includes in patient medical services, patient flow, mental health and substance abuse.



Karima Karmali, RN, BScN, MBA

*Director, Centre for Innovation & Excellence in Child and Family-Centred Care
The Hospital for Sick Children*

Karima Karmali has over 20 years of leadership experience in health care and is the Director of the Centre for Innovation & Excellence in Child- and Family-Centred Care at The Hospital for Sick Children (SickKids) in Toronto. In this role, she provides strategic and operational leadership to advance the design and delivery of health care to better meet the needs of patients and their families. Karima champions and leads initiatives aimed at improving patient and family experience at SickKids. She has a special interest in health equity for vulnerable populations and international health issues. Ms. Karmali is a strong proponent of volunteerism and gives of her time both locally and internationally. She is currently the Vice-President of the Aga Khan Ismaili Council for Canada. Karima obtained her Bachelor of Science in Nursing from McGill University and a Master of Business Administration from Queens University.



Hans B. Kersten, MD

*Professor of Pediatrics
Drexel University College of Medicine
Attending and Physician
St. Christopher's Hospital for Children*

Hans Kersten graduated from Temple University School of Medicine and completed his residency at St. Christopher's Hospital for Children (SCHC). He is an attending and hospitalist physician at SCHC, the medical director of the multidisciplinary Grow Clinic, and a professor of pediatrics at Drexel University College of Medicine. Dr. Kersten founded the Reach Out and Read programs at St. Christopher's Hospital for Children over 10 years ago and is a member of the Reach Out and Read Greater Philadelphia Advisory Committee. He has led recent efforts for St. Christopher's to become "hunger-free" by developing initiatives to screen for FI throughout the hospital, providing resources for families, organizing food drives, improving fresh food access by starting the F2F and FreshRX programs at the hospital and the Philly Food Cart in the lobby. He has completed over 20 invited lectureships on failure to thrive and FI, and presented an American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) webinar on FI. He is a member of the APAs Task Force on Childhood Poverty, received the Vincent Zarro, MD, PhD Community Outreach Award from Drexel University College of Medicine (DUCOM) for his advocacy and scholarly efforts and has recently been elected to DUCOMs Alpha Omega Alpha (AOA) Honor Medical Society.



Lenny López, MD, MDiv, MPH

*Senior Faculty, Disparities Solutions Center, Massachusetts General Hospital
Chief of Hospital Medicine, Associate Professor of Medicine,
University of California San Francisco*

Lenny López, MD, MDiv, MPH, is Senior Faculty at the Disparities Solutions Center, Chief of Hospital Medicine and Associate Professor of Medicine at the University of California San Francisco. Dr. López is an internist trained at the Brigham and Women's Hospital (BWH), who completed the Commonwealth Fund Fellowship in Minority Health Policy at the Harvard School of Public Health and a Hospital Medicine fellowship at BWH. Dr. López joined the Mongan Institute for Health Policy (MIHP) in 2008 after his research fellowship in General Internal Medicine at Massachusetts General Hospital (MGH) and was an Assistant Professor of Medicine at Harvard Medical School until 2015. With an ultimate goal of reducing healthcare disparities in cardiovascular disease and diabetes, his current research addresses issues relating to patient safety and language barriers, optimizing primary care clinical services for Latinos with cultural and linguistic barriers, and using health information technology to decrease disparities. A second line of research is investigating the epidemiology of acculturation among Latinos in the US and its impact on the prevalence and development of cardiovascular disease and Type II diabetes. This research will

help inform how to better design clinical interventions for improving chronic disease management among Latinos.



Arie L. Nettles, PhD, NCSP, HSP

*Associate Professor of Clinical Pediatrics, Licensed Psychologist, Developmental Medicine, Vanderbilt University School of Medicine
Director, Office of Inclusion & Health Equity
Vanderbilt University Medical Center*

Dr. Nettles is associate professor of clinical pediatrics and psychologist for school age children to young adults with developmental disabilities, autism, and craniofacial in the Vanderbilt University Medical Center (VUMC) Division of Developmental Medicine.

Founder and director of VUMC’s Office of Inclusion and Health Equity (OIHE) since 2011, Nettles has expanded the program from its origins at Monroe Carell Jr. Children’s Hospital at Vanderbilt to encompass the entirety of the enterprise on cultural awareness, unconscious bias and Respect@Work: Sexual Harassment education and training.

Nettles is a licensed psychologist; nationally certified school psychologist; nationally registered health service provider; and an alumnus of the Disparities Leadership Program. Appointed by the Governor, Nettles chairs the Tennessee Statewide Planning and Policy Council for the Department of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities. Her current research is cultural competency in health care.



Patricia Oceanic, MSOD

*Administrative Director, Office of Health Equity and Inclusion
Nemours/Alfred I. DuPont Hospital for Children*

Pat enables cultural change throughout the Delaware Valley by driving initiatives to eliminate healthcare disparities. The six areas of focus include: quality; community engagement; workforce diversity; research; cultural competence training; language, literacy and healthcare literacy.

Prior to joining Nemours, Pat initiated and launched a global diversity initiative with W.L. Gore and Associates, (one of Fortune’s top 100 companies) and established affinity groups that identified group-level issues of gender, race, culture, age and sexual orientation, and worked in collaboration with senior leadership to address barriers raised.



Patricia A. Rodriguez, MD, FAAP

Vice President and Chief Health Equity & Inclusion Officer

As Vice President and Chief Health Equity & Inclusion Officer at Children’s Health, Dr. Rodriguez and her team lead the charge in cultural competency, addressing health disparities, and the development of a comprehensive healthcare delivery model for the population in North Texas via community and population health efforts. Dr. Rodriguez believes that to be successful, the voice of the family must be the focal point through program development and implementation. With an eye toward culturally competent care as well as addressing social determinants of health, she is committed to helping medical providers, community organizations and other stakeholders rethink the way healthcare is delivered and evaluated. Nationally, Dr. Rodriguez serves as a Steering Committee member for a pioneer Health Equity workgroup in the Solutions for Patient Safety (SPS) Network to establish a framework for how health equity is addressed in the pediatric healthcare setting. She also serves as a Charter Steering Committee member for a new provisional section of the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), Minority Health, Equity and Inclusion (MHEI) and most recently was selected to serve as Program Chair for MHEI’s NCE educational programming.

Prior to joining Children’s Health, Dr. Rodriguez served as Director of Pediatrics for Vecino Health Centers, a federally qualified health center (FQHC) in Houston, Texas. Under her direction, a successful pediatric clinic was created to provide quality health care to an underserved, predominantly Hispanic community on Houston’s north side.



Karen Sappleton, MSED, MSW, RSW

Senior Manager, Centre for Innovation & Excellence in Child and Family-Centred Care

The Hospital for Sick Children

Karen Sappleton is a mother of two young boys and is the Senior Manager of Child and Family-Centred Care & Health Equity in the Centre for Innovation & Excellence in Child and Family Centred Care at SickKids. In this capacity she manages the Interpreter Services department, the Family Centre (children’s library and health information for families and the schooling program), and the Office of Patient and Family Experience. Karen has been a member of the SickKids community for the last 11 years, first as a clinical social worker in the Clinical and Metabolic Genetics Program as well as the Good 2 Go Transition Program in Adolescent Medicine, and as a Clinical Research Project Manager for the Department of Social Work. Karen was also an Inter-Professional Education Specialist as a member of the New Immigrant Support Network, supporting the

development and implementation of the Cultural Competence workshops at SickKids and running the Train-the-Trainer workshops throughout the province of Ontario. Karen continues to teach, present and runs workshops on health equity, social justice, child and family-centred care, and patient experience. Prior to her career with SickKids, Karen was an educator and administrator in New York City, working predominantly with children and youth with learning disabilities and special needs. Karen is passionate about health equity, social justice, education, and supporting all of our children and families to have the best healthcare experience possible.



Aswita Tan-McGrory, MBA, MSPH

Administrative Director

Mongan Institute, Massachusetts General Hospital

Deputy Director

The Disparities Solutions Center, Massachusetts General Hospital

As Administrative Director of the Mongan Institute, Aswita works in tandem with the Director to provide overall strategic and operational responsibility for Mongan Institute staff, programs, expansion, and execution of its mission. In addition, she works with the Mongan Institute Unit leadership to facilitate interdisciplinary team work, manage and improve operations, provide data and decision-support, manage team initiatives and projects and provide oversight for strategic initiatives as the Institute moves forward under the direction of the Mongan Institute Director. The Mongan Institute in the Department of Medicine at Massachusetts General Hospital is dedicated to supporting research across MGH in the areas of population and health care delivery science. The Mongan Institute brings together nine existing research centers: the Medical Practice Evaluation Center, the Health Policy Research Center, the Global Health Research Center, the Disparities Solutions Center, the Disparities Research Unit, the Cancer Outcomes Research Program, the Clinical and Translational Epidemiology Unit, the MGH Health Decision Science Center, and the Tobacco Research and Treatment Center, as well as a developing program in primary care research in the Division of Internal Medicine.

In her role as Director at the Disparities Solutions Center, Ms. Tan-McGrory leads the Center’s portfolio of projects focused on addressing racial and ethnic disparities in health care. Ms. Tan-McGrory also travels across the country to speak to organizations about how race, ethnicity, and language impact the quality of care. Ms. Tan-McGrory serves on several executive committees, including the MGH Diversity Committee, and the Partners Health Equity and Quality Committee. In addition, Ms. Tan-McGrory sits on the board of the Massachusetts Public Health Association and is Adjunct Faculty at Northeastern University. Ms. Tan-McGrory currently serves on the MA Executive Office of Health and Human Services’ Quality Measurement Alignment Taskforce.

Ms. Tan-McGrory's interests are in providing equitable care to underserved populations and she has over 20 years of professional experience in the areas of disparities, maternal/child health, elder homelessness, and HIV testing and counseling. She received her Master of Business Administration from Babson College and her Master of Science in Public Health, with a concentration in tropical medicine and parasitology, from Tulane University School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine. Ms. Tan-McGrory is a Returned Peace Corps Volunteer where she spent 2 years in rural Nigeria, West Africa, on water sanitation and Guinea Worm Eradication projects.

She received a YMCA Achievers award in 2017 for community service and professional achievement, and in 2016 was selected as a Pioneer as part of a groundbreaking initiative Children's Wellbeing initiative by Ashoka Changemakers and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.



Nikki Tennermann, MSSW

*Administrative Director, Office of Health Equity and Inclusion
Boston Children's Hospital*

Nikki Tennermann is the Administrative Director in the Office of Health Equity and Inclusion at Boston Children's Hospital. Ms. Tennermann is a licensed clinical social worker with a background in complex care, early childhood development, and diversity and inclusion training. Ms. Tennermann has provided consultation to social service and healthcare professionals around reducing bias in clinical judgment through critical exploration of self and self-awareness. She has assisted with curriculum development for trainings on unconscious bias and racial identity development and has investigated how social determinants of health impact pediatric patients. She is passionate about mentoring students of all ages and increasing access to mental health services through telehealth. Ms. Tennermann hopes to enhance health equity and reduce health outcome disparities through systems-level analysis and research, promotion of diversity and representation across service areas, and collaboration with hospital and community stakeholders.

Nikki Tennermann obtained her BA in psychology and Spanish from Bard College in 2009 and her MSSW in Advanced Clinical Practice from Columbia University School of Social Work in 2011. She holds a certificate in Cognitive Behavioral Therapy from Boston University. Clinically, Ms. Tennermann identifies as an anti-oppressive social worker and practices from a social justice and empowerment standpoint. She pays particular attention to race, culture and beliefs as they impact clinical encounters and practices in English and Spanish.



Valerie L. Ward, MD, MPH

Medical Director, Office of Health Equity and Inclusion

Pediatric Radiologist

Boston Children's Hospital

Valerie L. Ward (AB, MPH, Harvard University; MD, Yale University School of Medicine) is the Medical Director of Health Equity and Inclusion at Boston Children's Hospital (BCH); Staff Radiologist at BCH; and Assistant Professor of Radiology at Harvard Medical School (HMS). Early in her career, Valerie was sponsored by BCH to participate in the Fellows Program of The Partnership, Inc., a Boston-based organization dedicated to workplace diversity and inclusion through professional and organizational development. Subsequently she was appointed as the Faculty Director and Co-Chair of the BCH Diversity and Cultural Competency Council (DCCC). Her clinical and research interests focus on understanding factors that lead to disparate outcomes for diverse children, improving the health care provider and patient interaction, and assessing diagnostic imaging technology. Along with the research working group of the DCCC, she obtained funding from the Blue Cross Blue Shield Foundation of Massachusetts to study the factors that affect communication between health care providers and diverse in-patients and their families. This study led to the development of a patient "navigation" tool. She later collaborated with pediatric colleagues to perform a study that led to a better understanding of missed care opportunities for diverse outpatients in the primary care setting at BCH. Dr. Ward was a 2012 recipient of the HMS Harold Amos Faculty Diversity Award. She has also been the Physician Director for Quality Improvement in the BCH Department of Radiology, and in this role improved the educational experience of trainees and faculty in recognizing and understanding factors involved in difficult and missed diagnoses in pediatric imaging. Currently, she has combined her pediatric diagnostic imaging expertise with her health equity and inclusion interests to form collaborations with the BCH Program for Patient Safety and Quality to Co-Chair a newly formed Demographic Data Collection Working Group, the BCH Academy for Teaching and Educational Innovation and Scholarship to create a college-to-medical school pipeline program for those who are underrepresented in medicine, and colleagues across multiple pediatric subspecialties at BCH to Co-Chair the Healthcare Disparities Research Working Group as a forum for presenting and sharing ongoing research aimed at improving health outcomes for all children.