

Keynote

Georges C. Benjamin, MD
Executive Director, American Public Health Association
Board Vice Chair and Chair for our Food & Nutrition committee, Reagan-Udall Foundation for the FDA



Georges C. Benjamin, MD, is a well-known health policy leader, practitioner, and administrator. He currently serves as the executive director of the American Public Health Association, the nation's oldest and largest organization of public health professionals. He is also a former secretary of health for the state of Maryland. Dr. Benjamin is a graduate of the Illinois Institute of Technology and the University of Illinois College of Medicine. He is board-certified in internal medicine, a Master of the American College of Physicians, a fellow of the

National Academy of Public Administration, a fellow emeritus of the American College of Emergency Physicians, and a member of the National Academy of Medicine. At APHA he serves as the publisher for the American Journal of Public Health, the Nation's Health Newspaper and APHA Press, the associations book company. He serves on several nonprofit boards such as Research!America, the Truth Foundation, the Environmental Defense Fund, Ceres, and the Reagan-Udall Foundation. He is also a former member of the National Infrastructure Advisory Council, a council that advises the President on how best to assure the security of the nation's critical infrastructure.

Speakers

RDML Richardae Araojo, PharmD, MS
Associate Commissioner for Minority Health, Director, Office of Minority Health and Health Equity, U.S. Food and Drug Administration



Rear Admiral Richardae Araojo, PharmD, MS serves as the Associate Commissioner for Minority Health and Director of the Office of Minority Health and Health Equity at the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA). In this role, RDML Araojo provides leadership, oversight, and direction on minority health and health disparity matters for the Agency. RDML Araojo previously served as the Director of the Office of Medical Policy Initiatives in FDA's Center for Drug Evaluation and Research (CDER), where she led a variety of broad-based

medical and clinical policy initiatives to improve the science and efficiency of clinical trials and enhance professional and patient labeling. RDML Araojo joined FDA in 2003, where she held several positions in CDER. RDML Araojo received her doctoral degree in Pharmacy from Virginia Commonwealth University, completed a Pharmacy Practice Residency at University of Maryland, and earned a master's degree in Pharmacy Regulation and Policy from the University of Florida.

Oscar Benavidez, MD, MBA, MPP
Managing Director/Chief Congenital Cardiology and DEI Director, Massachusetts General Hospital



Oscar J. Benavidez, MD, MBA, MPP, is the Division Chief of Pediatric/Congenital Cardiology and the Medical Director of the Pediatric Cardiac Catheterization and Surgical Programs at Massachusetts General Hospital. Dr. Benavidez is also the Director of Diversity and Equity at Mass General Hospital for Children. His clinical area of expertise is Non-Invasive Congenital Cardiac Imaging from fetus to adult patients with congenital heart disease. Dr. Benavidez is involved in health services research and has published on topics related to patient safety and quality as it pertains to the care of patients with congenital heart disease. He is also on national committees that develop and implement quality measures.

Nicole Evans, MPH
Director, Equity & Population Health, National Academy for State Health Policy



Nicole Evans, MPH, joined The National Academy for State Health Policy (NASHP) in 2021 as the project director for Population and Public Health. Prior to joining NASHP, she was responsible for advancing vaccination health literacy and health equity in underinsured and underserved communities as a health equity program manager with CDC Foundation. To the project director role, she also brings previous experience as a deputy director for state affairs with the National Committee for Quality Assurance (NCQA) where she led 13 states as a Medicaid subject matter expert specializing in state programs for Individuals with Developmental Disabilities, Individuals with Intellectual Disabilities, behavioral health and mental health, and maternal health outcomes. Former roles also include management positions with North Carolina Department of Medical Assistance, Texas Health and Human Service Commission, and the Austin/Travis County Health Department. She has a master's in Public Health from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (UNC), where she also held a program manager role with UNC Ethnicity, Culture, and Health Outcomes (ECHO) Program, and a bachelor's degree in Political Science from Hampton University.

Deanna Fulp, MBA
Senior Director Health Equity , Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts



Deanna Fulp, MBA, is Senior Director of Health Equity for Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts. In this role, she leads work to fulfil the company's goal to eliminate inequities in health care and outcomes care for all its members. The hallmark of Fulp's work is market-focused transformative change initiatives in complex, highly regulated arenas. At Blue Cross she has served in roles spanning the company including the Chief Operating Office, Finance, Strategy & Business Consulting, Corporate Relations, and Supplier groups. In her roles, she led an accelerator program for health technology startups; an innovative suite of hospital governance programs; new technology developments including interactive consultative sales tools

and mobile student consumer apps; execution of new market segmentation strategy; and the company's first formal Supplier Diversity Program.

Prior to joining Blue Cross, Fulp worked in Latin American consumer financial services, first for a large U.S bank where she specialized in international private banking, followed by a global nonprofit pioneer in microfinance and impact investing. Ms. Fulp holds an MBA from Simmons College and a bachelor's degree from Wesleyan University. With a deep interest in design and creative process, she serves on the Foundation Board & Corporate Advisory Committee of the Massachusetts College of Art and Design.

Gary A. Puckrein, PhD

President and Chief Executive Officer, National Minority Quality Forum



Gary A. Puckrein, PhD, is President and Chief Executive Officer of the National Minority Quality Forum (formerly the National Minority Health Month Foundation), a not-for-profit organization that he founded in 1998. The Forum addresses the critical need for strengthening national and local efforts to use evidence-based, data-driven initiatives to guide programs to eliminate the disproportionate burden of premature death and preventable illness for racial and ethnic minorities and other special populations. In April 2001, the National Minority Health Month Foundation launched National Minority Health Month in response to Healthy People 2010, the national health-promotion and disease-prevention initiative.

Dr. Puckrein was graduated Phi Beta Kappa from Brown University, where he received his master's degree (1974) and doctorate (1978). Between 1974 and 1992, he taught and lectured at Roger Williams College, Brown University, Connecticut College, and Rutgers University, where he was a tenured member of the faculty. Dr. Puckrein has received many awards and honors, including being named a visiting scholar and fellow at the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History and a visiting fellow at Princeton University. He was publisher of American Visions, the country's leading African American art and cultural magazine, which he launched during his tenure at the Smithsonian Institution and Rutgers University. Dr. Puckrein also created and launched Minority Health Today, which served the needs of clinicians practicing in minority communities.

Carla Rodriguez-Watson, PhD, MPH

Director of Research, Reagan-Udall Foundation for the FDA



Carla Rodriguez-Watson, PhD, MPH, is the Director of Research for the Reagan-Udall Foundation for the FDA. Dr Rodriguez-Watson is focused on continuously developing and enhancing a portfolio of work that leverages real-world data and experiences to inform and conduct clinical and post-market drug safety and effectiveness studies. Projects include those focused on developing and advancing frameworks and tools to systematically describe data sources and methods for use in pre and post-market studies of product safety and effectiveness; as well as the the Innovation in Medical Evidence, Development and Surveillance (IMEDS) Program – where such tools can be leveraged. IMEDS

leverages a distributed network and tools developed by the FDA’s Sentinel initiative to design and execute post-market drug safety studies in a network of 9 healthcare systems representing over 111 M persons. Dr Rodriguez-Watson brings her extensive background in public health surveillance and health outcomes research to this work. She earned her doctoral degree in Epidemiology from the University of Washington School of Public Health, her master’s degree in Public Health from Columbia University Mailman School of Public Health, and her bachelor’s degree from Rutgers University.

Hemi Tewarson, JD, MPH

Executive Director, National Academy for State Health Policy



Hemi Tewarson, JD, MPH, is the Executive Director of the National Academy of State Health Policy (NASHP), a nonpartisan forum of policymakers throughout state governments, learning, leading, and implementing innovative solutions to health policy challenges. Ms. Tewarson joins NASHP from the Duke-Margolis Center for Health Policy where she had been a leader of the Center's emerging state policy portfolio, including COVID-19 testing and containment, vaccine distribution and education, coverage and health system reform, Medicaid

system improvements and addressing equity within and beyond the COVID-19 pandemic. Previously, Ms. Tewarson served as the director of the Health Division at the National Governors Association’s (NGA) Center for Best Practices, overseeing a broad project portfolio including Medicaid transformation and coverage, Medicaid data systems, health care delivery and payment system reform, workforce, opioids, and behavioral health and social determinants of health. She also served as senior attorney for the Office of the General Counsel at the U.S. Government Accountability Office addressing Medicaid and related health care topics for members of Congress. Ms. Tewarson holds a juris doctorate from George Washington University, a master’s in Public Health from George Washington University, and a bachelor’s degree in Psychology from the University of Pennsylvania. She lives in Maryland with her husband and two daughters.

Claudia A. Withers, JD

Chief Operating Officer, Civil Rights Corps



Claudia Withers, JD, has substantial experience in the civil rights space as a litigator, policy advocate and organizational leader. She is currently the Chief Operating Officer of Civil Rights Corps, a national civil rights organization that challenges wealth-based and race-based systems of oppression. CRC has won groundbreaking litigation challenging the rise of debtors’ prisons, abusive private probation schemes, and wealth-based pre-trial detention. Claudia also has

served as the Chief Operating Officer for the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and the United States Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. Claudia served in the Clinton Administration as a Deputy General Counsel in the Office of General Counsel at the U.S. Department of Education. Claudia Withers has served as the Director of Programs for the District of Columbia Bar Foundation, where she developed and directed grants and loan repayment

programs to support civil legal services to the poor and underserved in the District of Columbia. In addition, she served as Director of Public Policy for the Center for Women Policy Studies, the Executive Director of the Fair Employment Council of Greater Washington, and the Director of Employment Programs for the National Partnership on Women and Families (formerly Women’s Legal Defense Fund). Claudia has been an adjunct professor at the David A. Clarke School of Law at the University of the District of Columbia, and the Washington College of Law at American University. Ms. Withers practiced law in Durham, NC, and clerked for the Honorable Richard C. Erwin for the Middle District of North Carolina. She is a graduate of UNC Chapel Hill School of Law and Duke University.

Moderators

**Michelle McMurry-Heath, MD, PhD
Former CEO & President, Biotechnology Innovation Organization (BIO)**



Michelle McMurry-Heath, MD, PhD, recently served as the President and CEO of the Biotechnology Innovation Organization (BIO). A physician and molecular immunologist by training, Dr. McMurry-Heath is a firm believer that science is limitless if we limit science less. Throughout her career, she has sought to unleash the power of science to solve society’s biggest challenges by uniting and empowering biotech innovators and removing barriers to their work. A common thread across “Dr. Michelle’s” career in academia, government and industry has been her focus on broadening access to scientific progress so more patients from diverse backgrounds can benefit from cutting-edge innovation. She calls the distribution of scientific progress “the social justice issue of our age.” Upon coming to BIO, she launched the BIOEquality Agenda to harness the potential of biotechnology for underserved communities and champions issues such as greater clinical trial diversity.

Prior to her time at BIO, Dr. McMurry-Heath was also a key science policy leader in government. The Obama-Biden transition team tapped her to conduct a comprehensive analysis of the National Science Foundation’s policies, programs, and personnel. President Obama then named her associate science director of the FDA’s Center for Devices and Radiological Health under Commissioner Peggy Hamburg. In that role, she championed clinical trial evolution, the use of real-world evidence in product evaluation, and an embrace of the patient’s voice in health research so new medical products deliver outcomes that matter to them. Dr. McMurry-Heath was the founding director of the Aspen Institute’s Health, Biomedical Science, and Society Policy Program. She received her early training in science policy from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and later served as Senator Joe Lieberman’s top legislative aide for science and health. In that role, she drafted legislation to protect the country from biological attacks.

Dr. McMurry-Heath received her medical and doctoral degrees from Duke’s Medical Scientist Training Program, becoming the first African American to graduate from the prestigious program.

She spent 12 years working at the research bench before taking policy and leadership roles in government and industry.

**Susan C. Winckler, RPh, Esq.
CEO, Reagan-Udall Foundation for the FDA**



Susan C. Winckler, RPh, Esq. is CEO of the Reagan-Udall Foundation for the FDA, the non-profit organization created by Congress to advance the mission of the FDA. Prior to accepting the Foundation post, she served as President of Leavitt Partners Solutions, a healthcare strategy firm founded by Gov. Michael O. Leavitt, former Secretary of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Winckler directly advised C-suite executives of a wide range of organizations on public policy and regulation, business strategy, investments, and other major business matters.

As Chief of Staff for the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (2007-2009), she managed the Commissioner’s Office, served both Republican and Democratic commissioners as their senior-most staff adviser, analyzed complex policy challenges and represented FDA with myriad government entities and external stakeholders. Her earlier career service included more than a decade at the American Pharmacists Association in a series of positions of increasing responsibility.