

SPEAKERS / PRESENTERS*

*AS OF MARCH 28, 2024



Rebekah Angove, PhD, is responsible for the design and management of Patient Advocate Foundation's (PAF's) comprehensive evaluation and patient experience program. In her role as executive vice president of research and evaluation, she helps PAF to identify patient needs, translate those needs to direct services and policy recommendations, and evaluate the impact of these programs and services on patients and the patient community. Dr. Angove is driven by her passion to advance the field and promote patient engagement in care, policy and research. In her previous role at the Louisiana Public Health Institute, she served as Associate Director of Health Services Research and Engagement Director of REACHnet, a PCORnet Clinical Data Research Network. Dr. Angove's expertise spans numerous clinical research programs and advisory groups including service on the PCORnet Engagement committee and the Tulane Preventive Medicine Residency Advisory Committee. She received her PhD in Public and Community Health in 2014 from the Medical College of Wisconsin, Milwaukee, WI.



Alan Balch, PhD, has more than 20 years of executive leadership in the non-profit sector spanning multiple advocacy areas including access and affordability, health equity, prevention and early detection, and cancer research. He became the CEO of both PAF and NPAF in 2013 and has served as a member of both Boards of Directors since 2007. Dr. Balch currently serves or recently served on dozens of selective boards, steering committees, and councils for an array of institutions to include the National Academies of Medicine, the National Quality Forum (NQF), National Committee for Quality Assurance (NCQA), the Institute for Clinical and Economic Review (ICER), the Clinical Pathways Congress, the Council for Affordable Health Coverage (CAHC), the Innovation and Value Initiative (IVI), Core Quality Measure Collaborative (CQMC), the Foundation for the Accreditation of Cellular Therapy (FACT), the Hutchinson Institute for Cancer Outcomes Research (HICOR), the Duke-Margolis Value-Based Payment Consortium, the Specialty Pharmacy Certification Board (SPCB), and the Pharmacy Quality Alliance (PQA). Most recently, Dr. Balch was selected as a Co-Chair of the North American Patient Representatives Roundtable for the Professional Society for Health Economics and Outcomes Research (ISPOR). He earned his PhD in 2003 from the University of California Santa Cruz, his master's degree in 1997 from the University of Texas San Antonio; and his bachelor's degree in 1994 from Trinity University in San Antonio.



Erin Bradshaw has been an integral part of Patient Advocate Foundation since joining just two years after its inception in 1998. With over 25 years of dedicated experience within the organization, Erin has played a pivotal role in shaping its growth and impact. Throughout her tenure at PAF, she has held various positions, each contributing significantly to the organization's mission. From her early days as a dedicated case manager to her leadership roles in Training and Quality Assurance for the Case Management Department, External Communications, Patient Education, and notably as an executive leader for the Case Management Department for 11 years. She currently serves as the Executive Vice President for the Advancement of Patient Services and Navigation in Program Development where she is responsible for developing relationships with new and potential donors in order to secure grants, donations, and cooperative agreements in support of PAF's case management, CareLine, and social needs navigation programs and initiatives.



Cynthia Bunes JD, MBA is a global patient and research advocate for Primary Sclerosing Cholangitis (PSC), a rare, cholestatic, progressive liver disease, for over 12 years. Ms. Bunes is a member of the Global Liver Institute Pediatric and Rare Liver Diseases Council and Chair of its Research Working Group, and the Parent Leader for Stanford University, Autoimmune Liver Disease Network for Kids (A-LiNK). As a patient advocate, Ms. Bunes spends much time educating patients and their physicians on PSC, treatment options for the disease, and helping with insurance coverage issues. In her research capacity, she collaborates with physicians and scientists to further understand insight to the PSC disease process, the effectiveness of the currently available off-label therapies, and how the microbiome may be involved in the disease process. She works with the physician teams to design, write, and fund trial and study protocols. Where possible, Ms. Bunes integrates academic and clinical researchers with pharmaceutical scientists to help accelerate the discovery of new therapies. She is the co-author of six published journal papers related to PSC (two additional papers are under submission) with physicians from Mayo Clinic, Stanford, UCLA, Yale, Università di Roma, Baylor, University of Queensland, Toronto Centre for Liver Disease, among other medical institutions. In 2021, Cynthia was a panelist for The Future of Liver Health at the Royal Society in London.



Yuri Cartier, MPH, is a Senior Research Associate at the Social Interventions Research & Evaluation Network (SIREN) at the University of California, San Francisco. She carries out research and dissemination activities focused on the integration of social care into health care, with recent work on the role of technology to facilitate cross-sector social care coordination, patient engagement in research, and anti-racist research methods. Previously, she led scientific activities at the International Union for Health Promotion & Education. Yuri lives in the San Francisco Bay Area and is an avid admirer of other people's dogs.



Kathleen Gallagher, MPH, is the Vice President of Health Services Research at PAF and the Managing Director of Research at PAF's Patient Insight Institute. She is an epidemiologist and health services researcher with 20 years of experience working in the public, private, academic and non-profit sectors. Ms. Gallagher has implemented and overseen patient driven research projects for the New York City Department of Health, Mount Sinai School of Medicine, Columbia University Medical Center, GMHC and LIM Innovations. Prior research endeavors have focused on traditional and non-traditional underserved patient populations and the links between health care access, service utilization and barriers to care. Her current research focus at PAF centers around the science of social needs navigation, patient centered research engagement and identifying unmet needs in low-income chronically ill patients. Kathleen lives in Atlanta, Georgia and earned her Bachelor of Science in Public Health from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in Environmental Science & Engineering and her Master of Public Health in Epidemiology from Emory University in Atlanta.



Danielle Hessler Jones, PhD, is co-Director of the Social Interventions Research and Evaluation Network (SIREN) and a Professor and Vice Chair for Research in the Department of Family and Community Medicine at the University of California, San Francisco. Her research focuses on social care delivery in the health care sector; including understanding the impact and implementation of programs aimed at screening and addressing social risks alongside programs that seek to adjust care to fit an individual's social context. As a health psychologist, Dr. Hessler Jones also brings experience in health behaviors and engagement and intersections with mental health.



Sarah Hoyt, MPH, is a Senior Manager of Health Systems Improvement at AcademyHealth, where her work focuses on health systems transformation and health care innovation to promote equity and improve health outcomes. Sarah is an experienced health services researcher with expertise related to disability policy, integrated care, health care quality and performance measurement, as well as Medicare and Medicaid policy. Her specific research interests lie in facilitating learning health systems and quality improvement to better serve historically marginalized and underserved populations. Sarah currently manages research for the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) related to facilitating learning communities for primary care practice improvement, and for the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) related to enhancing systems of care for children with medical complexity.



Frances Jiménez, MPH, is a Senior Research Associate at NORC at the University of Chicago in the Health Implementation Science Center. NORC's Health Implementation Science Center seeks to systematically close the gap between what we know and what we do in health care delivery. Frances' work focuses on improving patient-centered outcomes research (PCOR) data infrastructure and tools so that we can better study and understand outcomes that are more meaningful to patients and their caregiver.



Catherine Koola Fischer, MPH, serves as the Director of Patient Engagement for the Institute for Clinical and Economic Review (ICER) and is committed to strengthening the patient voice within ICER value assessments. Her role includes outreach and onboarding for ICER reviews, enhancing ICER's resources to be more patient-friendly, and nurturing relationships with patient community partners. She serves as the Co-Chair of [ICER's Patient Council](#) which was formally launched in July of 2023. In addition, Cat is a Steering Committee member of HTAi's [Patient and Citizen Involvement](#) Interest Group (PCIG) as well as the US HTA representative for the Medical Device Innovation Consortium (MDIC)'s [Health Economics Patient Value](#) (HEPV)'s working group. Cat has her MPH in Epidemiology from Emory University and her BS in Psychology from Texas A&M University.



Rhea Khurana graduated from the University of Toronto with an Honors Bachelor of Science in molecular genetics and microbiology, and global health. In her current role as a Research Associate at the Columbia University School of Nursing, she conducts mixed-methods, interventional research to address financial and health-related social needs during cancer treatment for adolescents and young adults with cancer. She aims to reduce overall health disparities in populations with chronic diseases.



Rebecca Kirch, JD, is the Executive Vice President of Policy and Programs for National Patient Advocate Foundation (NPAF). As a leading health policy expert and advocate in her field, she served for 15 years with the American Cancer Society and its advocacy affiliate, the American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network, directing quality of life and survivorship initiatives prior to joining NPAF. A frequently invited speaker on health policy, Rebecca has authored numerous articles and book chapters, including publications in the *New England Journal of Medicine*, *Archives of Internal Medicine*, *JAMA Oncology*, *Health Affairs*, and other professional journals. She is the recipient of numerous national awards, has been featured in multiple media outlets and also serves in leadership roles on several national advisory committees and advocacy coalitions. Rebecca is also dedicated to volunteer service as a board member for Care Camps Foundation that supports pediatric oncology camps for children and families.



Cate Lockhart, PharmD, PhD, is the Executive Director of Biologics and Biosimilars Collective Intelligence Consortium where she is responsible for all programs of this multi-stakeholder research collaboration. She is a proven leader in health economics and outcomes research (HEOR), observational research, and managed care pharmacy through experience in the biopharmaceutical sector, experience as a consultant, and her current role under the Academy of Managed Care Pharmacy. Cate has three undergraduate degrees: Electrical Engineering, Visual Communications, and Theatre Arts. She also has three advanced degrees: PharmD, M.S. in HEOR, and a Ph.D. in Pharmaceutical Sciences. She has one U.S. Patent.



Kameswari "Kamu" Potharaju is a second-year MD/MS candidate at the UC Berkeley-UCSF Joint Medical Program. She is working with the Social Interventions Research and Evaluation Network (SIREN) at UCSF for her master's thesis project, which is a qualitative analysis of patient perspectives on the factors that drive high-quality social care. This work is a part of a project called Social Care repORted outcome measures (SCORE), which aims to develop a patient-reported experience measure for social care activities in healthcare settings. Kamu graduated from UC Berkeley in 2021 with a BA in public health and is passionate about improving the integration of social and medical care, especially for populations that have been historically marginalized. She is excited to share her team's research in conversation with her fellow panelists at the Patient Insight Congress!



Anita Reynolds is a healthcare advocate whose journey began with the Patient Advocate Foundation while pursuing her bachelor's degree in healthcare administration. Holding diverse roles, including Bilingual Medical Intake Coordinator, Bilingual Fertility Case Manager, Administrative Coordinator, and Relationship Manager for Patient Programs, she showcased her dedication. Now, as the Manager of Grassroots and Community Partnerships at the National Patient Advocate Foundation, Anita channels her expertise into fostering collaborations at the grassroots level, empowering communities to advocate for improved healthcare access. She collaborates closely with local organizations to amplify patient voices nationwide. While originally from Miami, Anita's relocation to Virginia followed her husband Christopher's military career in the United States Air Force. Alongside her professional pursuits, Anita takes great pride in her role as a devoted mother to her daughter Kylie and son Alexander.



Lisa C. Richardson, MD, MPH, is director of the Division of Cancer Prevention and Control (DCPC), the largest unit within the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion. As director of DCPC, she works with partners at the national, state, and local levels to break down barriers to good health and create opportunities for everyone to live long and healthy lives. Under her leadership, DCPC's four foundational programs, the National Breast and Cervical Cancer Early Detection Program, National Program of Cancer Registries, National Comprehensive Cancer Control Program, and Colorectal Cancer Control Program, have helped the cancer control community better understand, prevent and control cancer in all populations. Dr. Richardson also provides guidance for the Division's research agenda that includes the National Cancer Prevention and Control Research Network. A medical oncologist by training, she has authored or coauthored more than 150 peer-reviewed journal articles examining multi-sectoral approaches to improving cancer care access, delivery, and outcomes. For more background on Dr. Richardson, visit her profile on [DCPC's Leadership page](#).



Catherine Schofield is a Senior Project Coordinator for the Serious Illness Care Program at Ariadne Labs, a joint center for health systems innovation at Brigham and Women's Hospital and the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health in Boston, Massachusetts. She is a graduate of Boston College with a Bachelor of Science in Biology and minors in Italian Studies and Medical Humanities, Health, and Culture. She is passionate about health equity and innovation, bridging patient-clinician communication gaps, and working to improve the patient experience.



Megan Schoonveld-Diaz, MPH, is the Research and Evaluation Manager at Patient Advocate Foundation. At PAF, she supports data collection, interpretation, and visualization and helps develop necessary resources, tools, and materials to support research partners and patient advisors in research engagement. Megan is passionate about advocating for the inclusion of patient and family voices in research, recognizing their invaluable perspectives and contributions to advancing healthcare practices.



Abby Westerman is the Co-Founder and CEO of b-present Foundation, established in 2017 following the devastating loss of her daughter Kirsten to cancer at the age of 20. Kirsten's experience, and the challenges her friends faced staying connected after cancer highlighted a gap in the information and resources available to help friends be present and provide support when needed most. With her late daughter, Kirsten, as her inspiration, Abby retired from her 33-year career as an engineer in 2018 to lead b-present full-time. She is committed to ensuring every young adult diagnosed with cancer feels connected and supported throughout treatment and beyond. She envisions a world where everyone experiences kindness and connection, especially in times of struggle.



Melissa Williams, MPH, is the director of grassroots and community partnerships at National Patient Advocate Foundation (NPAF) where she oversees the volunteer program, community outreach hub for health equity, and leads all grassroots advocacy initiatives that advance the organization's policy goals. Melissa also serves as the co-chair of the organization's health equity affinity group and was a previous fellow of the Families USA Health Equity Academy in System Transformation. A passionate patient and community health advocate, Melissa's contribution to NPAF began as a volunteer over a decade ago while she was the lead assessor reviewing health and wellness programs for Job Corps. Impassioned by NPAF's mission and her previous experience working directly with patients in both emergency, primary care, and community health settings, she formally joined NPAF in 2015. Melissa earned her Master of Public Health degree in health management and policy from Eastern Virginia Medical School and her Bachelor of Science in biology from the College of William & Mary.