

Speaker Biographies

Industry Advisory Forum - July 19, 2024

Cathleen Biga, MSN, FACC- ACC President

Cathleen Biga, MSN, FACC, is President and CEO of Cardiovascular Management of Illinois, a cardiology physician practice management company. She has worked with more than 100 cardiovascular providers in the Chicago area and partners in their cardiovascular service lines at more than 14 acute care hospitals. She earned her Bachelor of Science degree in nursing from the Mayo/College of St. Teresa and Master of Science in Nursing from Northern Illinois University School of Nursing. Biga has more than 40 years of experience as a registered nurse, service line director, hospital vice president and CEO. She has 30 years of experience in physician practice management.

She has been active nationally in consulting in strategic planning, operational efficiencies, integrated financial and quality initiatives, and growth and development of the cardiovascular service lines. She is focused on facilitating the integration of strategic, financial and quality perspectives between cardiovascular service lines at practices and hospitals. In addition, she consults and lectures on numerous contemporary cardiovascular topics.

Biga is a member of ACC's Board of Trustees, a past member of the American Association of Cardiovascular and Pulmonary Rehabilitation Board and was the Inaugural Chair of MedAxiom's Board of Managers.

Ami Bhatt, MD, FACC- ACC Chief Innovation Officer

Dr. Ami B. Bhatt is Chief Innovation Officer of the American College of Cardiology, effective January 2022. In her role, Bhatt provides leadership and expertise in health care innovation and continues to grow the College's comprehensive Innovation Program in support of the ACC's Mission to transform cardiovascular care and improve heart health.

Bhatt has been a member of the ACC for nearly 20 years and a member of the ACC's Health Care Innovation Section, as well as the College's Lifelong Learning Oversight Committee.

As an active clinical cardiologist, investigator and educator Bhatt brings nearly 10 years of experience in telemedicine and digital health to her new role. She founded her first



program in virtual care in 2013 and continues to work on creating culturally relevant personalized virtual cardiovascular care delivery models. Her research has centered on identifying and implementing solutions to overcoming access barriers to cardiovascular and telemedicine care.

A graduate from Harvard College and the Yale School of Medicine, Bhatt completed her medicine and pediatrics residency at Harvard, her adult cardiology fellowship at Brigham and Women's Hospital and her adult congenital heart disease and pulmonary hypertension fellowship at the Boston Children's Hospital. She most recently served as the director of Outpatient and Telecardiology at the Massachusetts General Hospital (MGH) Corrigan-Minehan Heart Center. While ACC CIO, Bhatt will continue clinical practice at MGH in adult congenital heart disease and teaching as an associate professor at Harvard Medical School.

Melvin Echols, MD, FACC- ACC Chief Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Officer

Dr. Melvin R. Echols is the Chief Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Officer of the American College of Cardiology and leads the College's diversity, equity and inclusion strategy and programs. In his role, Echols works with ACC members, staff, external partners and other stakeholders to identify and implement programmatic goals and develop actionable and sustainable solutions to achieve a more diverse, equitable and inclusive College and cardiovascular profession.

Echols maintains a portion of his clinical and research responsibilities at Morehouse School of Medicine in Atlanta and is an associate professor of cardiovascular disease at Morehouse School of Medicine and serves as program director for the Cardiovascular Disease Fellowship. He is also a practicing cardiologist specializing in heart failure and brings more than a decade of experience as a clinical trial investigator focusing on heart failure, quality improvement, social determinants of health, and health care disparities. Echols graduated from Morehouse School of Medicine in 2002 and completed Internal Medicine at Duke University in 2005. He completed his cardiovascular fellowship training at Duke University Medical Center. He is a member of the ACC, Association of Black Cardiologists, the Heart Failure Society of America, the American Society of Preventive Cardiology, and the American Heart Association.

Beth Harris, DNP, ACNP-BC – Emory Healthcare

Dr. Elizabeth "Beth" K. Bolton-Harris brings a wealth of experience and dedication to healthcare advocacy, rooted in a lifelong commitment to service and community



empowerment. Originally from Athens, GA, Dr. Bolton-Harris embarked on her career journey by earning a Bachelor of Science in Nursing from Howard University in 1997. After gaining invaluable experience at local hospitals in Athens, she pursued advanced education at Emory University, where she earned her Master's of Science in Nursing with a focus in acute care nurse practitioner in 2001.

Dr. Bolton-Harris's career took a pivotal turn when she joined the United States Navy Reserve Nurse Corps in 2002, serving for a decade that included a deployment to Landstuhl Regional Medical Center in Germany in support of Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom. Her service as a Lieutenant in the Critical Care Unit earned her the Army Commendation Medal, highlighting her exceptional dedication and clinical expertise.

Currently, as a board-certified Acute Care Nurse Practitioner specializing in heart failure management, Dr. Bolton-Harris continues to make significant contributions to healthcare. She holds the esteemed position of Chief Advance Practice Provider for the division of Cardiology at Emory Healthcare, where her leadership and clinical acumen shape patient care and policy.

Beyond her clinical roles, Dr. Bolton-Harris is deeply engaged in advocacy and community service. She has held leadership positions in numerous nursing organizations, including the Black Nurses Collaborative where she serves as the Advocacy Committee Chair, Georgia Nursing Association as the previous Legislative and Public Policy Board Member, the American Association of Heart Failure Nurses as the Advocacy Committee Chair. She is also a member of the American College of Cardiology where she is currently an Implicit Bias trainer. Her advocacy extends to education as co-founder of South Fulton Parents for Education, a non-profit aimed at enhancing educational opportunities in her community. Dr. Bolton-Harris's commitment to community extends to her role as Campaign Manager for Fulton County School Board Member Franchesca Warren and her involvement in educational initiatives such as the Fulton County Educational SPLOST VI.

She is married to Darryl, a retired U.S. Navy Commander and Federal Law Enforcement Officer, and they are proud parents to Kyle, a high school student, and their beloved pet Gumbo. Her dedication to healthcare, advocacy, and community service makes Dr. Elizabeth "Beth" K. Bolton-Harris a compelling voice in shaping policies that impact healthcare and education, locally and beyond.

Michael Lawrence- ACC Director, State Government Affairs

Michael Lawrence currently serves as the Director of State Government Affairs at the American College of Cardiology. Michael leads a team dedicated to managing legislative and regulatory efforts across more than 50 states. Prior to joining ACC, he worked for the state government affairs firm, Stateside Associates, where he provided insight into key healthcare legislation for a range of Fortune 500 clients. Before moving to Washington, DC, he worked for a State Senator in the Tennessee General Assembly where his initial interest in working in public policy started.

Laxmi Mehta, MD, FACC- The Ohio State University

Dr. Laxmi Mehta is a noninvasive cardiologist and Professor of Medicine in the Division of Cardiovascular Medicine at The Ohio State University (OSU). She is the Chief of Well-Being Leader and Faculty Director of the Gabbe Well-Being Office at OSU's Medical Center and College of Medicine. She holds the Sarah Ross Soter Endowed Chair in Women's Cardiovascular Health and is the Director of Preventative Cardiology and Women's Cardiovascular Health. She is also the Associate Vice Chair of Wellness for the Department of Internal Medicine.

She is a past-President of the Ohio Chapter of the American College of Cardiology (ACC) and had previously served two terms as Secretary/Treasurer for the Ohio-ACC Chapter. She has served on several national ACC committees, and currently is the Chair of the Membership Committee. She previously served as President of the metro Columbus Board of Directors for the American Heart Association (AHA) and Member of the AHA's Great Rivers Affiliate Board. She is the past-Chair of the AHA's Cardiovascular Disease in Women and Special Populations Committee.

She specializes in professional well-being and burnout, cardiovascular disease prevention, women's cardiovascular health and cardiac imaging. She is a Fellow of the American College of Cardiology, American Heart Association, National Lipid Association, Executive Leadership in Academic Medicine (ELAM). She is a Diplomat of the American Board of Clinical Lipidology.

In 2016, she received the ACC's Inaugural Excellence in Advocacy Award and the AHA's Great Rivers Affiliate Distinguished Achievement Award. She was selected by Business First Magazine as one of Columbus' Top 40 under 40 in 2010 and honored as one of twelve women for the 2012 Women for Economic Leadership (WELD) Women You Should



Know Calendar Honoree. In 2020, she was presented the Satiani Award (MVP Award) and the Ruberg Award (Spirit Award) for OSU's Faculty Leadership Institute. And in 2022 she was inducted into the Mazzaferri-Ellison Society of Master Clinicians at OSU.

She received her medical degree from Northeastern Ohio Universities Colleges of Medicine and Pharmacy (6- year BS/MD program). She completed her Internal Medicine residency training, Clinical Cardiology fellowship training and advanced imaging (Level 3 CT/MRI) training at William Beaumont Hospital in Royal Oak, Michigan.

Nick Morse, MBA- ACC Division Vice-President, Advocacy

As DVP for Advocacy, Nick is charged with guiding and strengthening the ACC's interaction and influence with policymakers and other stakeholders to advance the College's mission of transforming cardiovascular care and improving heart health for all. In this role, he works with ACC staff and member leaders to spearhead engagement and the development of sound policy to lessen the burden of cardiovascular disease and address the complex issues facing America's health care system. Nick and the Advocacy division, in collaboration with ACC's Health Affairs Committee, are keenly focused on ensuring CV clinicians are supported in their tireless work for their patients.

Nick has been a proud member of the ACC team for 15 years. Prior to his time with the College, he worked in government relations for the National Association of Manufacturers and the American Orthotic & Prosthetic Association. He also spent three years teaching middle school social studies in suburban Maryland. Nick earned his MBA from the Haslam College of Business at the University of Tennessee. He and his wife Sara are graduates of Gettysburg College and live in Virginia with their three children, Charlie (14), Ellie (12), and Kate (9), and their charming rescue dog, Taylor Adele.

Modele Ogunniyi, MD, MPH, FACC- Emory University/Grady Health System

Dr. Modele Ogunniyi is a Professor of Medicine and Master Physician with the Division of Cardiology at Emory University. She also serves as the Associate Medical Director of the Grady Heart Failure Program. After receiving her medical degree from the University of Ibadan, Nigeria, she obtained a Master of Public Health and a Certificate in Health Finance and Management from Johns Hopkins University. Her postgraduate training includes a preventive medicine fellowship at the Centers for Disease Control, residency in internal medicine at Morehouse School of Medicine, and cardiology fellowship at Vanderbilt University.

Dr. Ogunniyi's research focuses on examining social determinants of health and eliminating disparities in cardiovascular disease, diversity in clinical trials, palliative care in heart failure, and cardiovascular disease in women. She is passionate about mentorship and creating equitable pathways to diversify the workforce in medicine. In recognition of her efforts, she received the Emory School of Medicine Excellence in Diversity and Inclusion Award, the R. Wayne Alexander Research Mentoring Award and the American Medical Women's Association INSPIRE Award.

She serves as Principal Investigator for several clinical trials and is on the advisory board for the Metro Atlanta Heart Failure Collaborative and the editorial board of Clinical Cardiology. She is an active member and volunteer of many professional organizations including the American College of Cardiology, American Heart Association, and the Association of Black Cardiologists, where she serves on the Board of Directors. She is a Fellow of the American College of Physicians, American College of Cardiology, and American Heart Association. Dr. Ogunniyi serves/ has served on several national committees, including as Co-Chair of the National Hypertension Control Roundtable and the ABC Membership Committee and on the National Forum Advisory Leadership Council. She is also a member of the cardiovascular disease in Women and Diversity and Inclusion Committees of the ACC. She is the Vice President of Health Awareness Initiative, Africa, a nonprofit organization, whose mission is to promote healthy lifestyles in African communities by creating health awareness through screening and education.

Gurusher Panjrath, MD, FACC- George Washington University

Dr. Gurusher Panjrath is an Advanced Heart Failure and Transplant Cardiologist in Washington, DC. He is a Professor of Medicine and the Director of the Heart Failure, Infiltrative Cardiomyopathy and Mechanical Circulatory Support Program. He also serves as the Director of GW Heart and Vascular Institute at The George Washington University.

He has a keen interest in education and developing educational programs nationally and internationally and in developing innovative solutions and clinical program building to improve equitable heart failure care. He has served as co-editor of Heart Failure self-assessment programs, on editorial boards including JACC: HF and directed development of HF curriculum for PCPs in Latin America. He has spoken widely at both national and international meetings.

Dr. Panjrath is the current governor for the Washington, DC chapter, past chair of the Heart Failure and Transplantation Section of American College of Cardiology. He has previously

co-chaired the heart house roundtable on improving heart failure care for both HFrEF and HFpEF. He practices in Washington, DC and focuses on the complete spectrum of heart failure care. His recent research has focused on interface of technology and heart failure care delivery for underserved communities.

Neerav Sheth, MD, MBA, FACC- Cardiology Consultants of Philadelphia

Dr. Neerav Sheth is an interventional cardiologist and multi-modality imager based outside of Philadelphia. He attended the University of Pennsylvania for his undergraduate graduate degree, medical school at Northeastern Ohio Universities College of Medicine, followed by an internal medicine residency at Thomas Jefferson, cardiology fellowship at Penn State Hershey, and interventional cardiology at Providence Hospital and Medical Center in Detroit. Dr. Sheth received his MBA from George Washington University. He is multi-boarded in Internal Medicine, General Cardiology, Interventional Cardiology, Cardiovascular CT, Echocardiography, Nuclear Cardiology and Vascular Interpretation.

Dr. Sheth currently serves as the Chair of the PA-ACC Health Affairs Committee, Pennsylvania Medical Society DEI Task Force, and President of the Montgomery County Medical Society and is coordinating advocacy efforts to improve access to healthcare in the state of Pennsylvania.

Himabindu Vidula, MD, MS, FACC- University of Pennsylvania/Penn Medicine

Dr. Himabindu (Hima) Vidula is associate professor of medicine and Medical Director of Mechanical Circulatory Support (MCS) at the University of Pennsylvania, as well as Medical Lead for MCS across Penn Medicine. Vidula's research interests are related to telehealth and remote monitoring in left ventricular assist device (LVAD) recipients. Her NIH R01 grants fund multicenter studies of blood pressure management and home-based exercise using wearables in LVAD recipients.

She received her medical degree from Northwestern University in Illinois and completed her residency, cardiovascular disease fellowship and advanced heart failure fellowship at Northwestern University.

Vidula was previously Medical Director of Heart Transplantation, founder and co-director of the Comprehensive Sarcoidosis and Amyloidosis Programs, and Program Director of the Advanced Heart Failure and Transplant Cardiology Fellowship at the University of Rochester in New York.

She has also been the Upstate Governor of ACC's New York State Chapter and a member of the ACC Board of Governors Steering Committee.

Thad Waites, MD, MACC- Hattiesburg Clinic/Forrest General Hospital

Dr. Thad Waites grew up in Waynesboro, VA. He is the “little brother” of Dr. James, Jimmy Waites- well known at UMMC and in MSMA and a member of the 2nd graduating class of UMC. Dr. Thad Waites is a graduate of Mississippi College and University of Mississippi Medical Center. His internship was at Grady Hospital, Atlanta, his Residency at the University of Colorado, and his cardiology fellowship at Emory University. He was in the US Naval Reserve as a flight surgeon for Marine Corps Airgroup 32 during Vietnam. He has practiced cardiology at Ochsner Clinic, where he was selected Teacher of the Year. And at Hattiesburg Clinic/Forrest General Hospital. He was president of MS Affiliate of the American Heart Association and twice president of the American Heart Southeast Affiliate. His principal vocation now is helping with the new and growing structural program of the Cath lab at Forrest General.

His main avocation has been with the American College of Cardiology. He is a Master of the ACC, the only one ever from Mississippi. And was last year selected as The Distinguished Fellow of the ACC. He was on the Board of Trustees and was Chairman of the Board of Governors. He had two terms as ACC’s Chair of the Health Affairs Committee (advocacy). He is a member of the ACC’s Advisory Committee to the AMA’s Relative Value System Committee (the RUC). He is a member and former Chair of the MS State Board of Health, serving under three governors and three wonderful State Health Officers. His chairmanship included the Covid and the Marijuana program formation years. At FGH, he was twice medical staff president. He was Chair of the Graduate Medical Education Committee and is a member of the FGH Foundation Board. In the Clinic, he was on the Board for a decade and vice president for most of that time. In Hattiesburg, he has been chosen this year for the Hub Award, awarded annually to two citizens for their contributions to Hattiesburg.

His major accomplishment in life is marrying Gerry, joining her family, and now having three grandchildren and two great-grands- who live in his backyard. When he isn’t busy with other things, he enjoys planning for and going on vacation with his daughter and granddaughter, Sheila and Ellie.

Mary Norine Walsh, MD, MACC- Ascension St. Vincent Cardiovascular Research Institute



Dr. Mary Norine Walsh earned both her undergraduate and medical degrees from the University of Minnesota. She completed her internship and residency at the University of Texas Southwestern, and her cardiology fellowship at Washington University School of Medicine in St. Louis, MO. She served as an assistant professor of medicine in the division of cardiology, as well as an assistant professor of radiology at the Hospital of the University of Pennsylvania from 1990 to 1992. Walsh joined what is now Ascension St. Vincent Medical Group in Indianapolis, IN in 1992. Her areas of expertise include heart failure and cardiac transplantation with a special interest in cardiovascular disease in women. She is the medical director of advanced heart failure and the Ascension St Vincent Cardiovascular Research Institute. Walsh also leads the Ascension Health heart failure service line. She serves as deputy editor of JACC Case Reports, associate editor for JACC: Heart Failure and is a reviewer for multiple scientific journals. She is an author of more than 200 articles and book chapters.

Walsh has been active in the ACC both locally and nationally. She was previously elected as president of the Indiana Chapter and has served on and chaired multiple committees and work groups and served as the organization's national president in 2017-2018.

Her teaching activities include instruction of students, residents and fellows and she lectures frequently on heart failure, heart disease in women, and topics in patient-centered healthcare. She is actively involved in clinical research in heart failure and systems approaches for quality initiatives in the practice setting.

Dr. Walsh has received numerous awards and recognitions including the Wenger Award for Medical Leadership in 2014, the St Vincent Distinguished Physician Award in 2018, the Women's Day Red Dress Award in 2019 and she has been elected by her peers for inclusion in Best Doctors in America annually since 2005.

Sammy Zakaria, MD, MPH, FACC- John's Hopkins University School of Medicine

Dr. Sammy Zakaria is the current Governor of the ACC Maryland Chapter and an Associate Professor of Medicine at the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine (JHUSOM). Because he specializes in critical care cardiology, he serves as the Director of the Johns Hopkins Bayview Medical Center (JHBMC) Cardiac Intensive Care Unit as well as attending in the Cardiac Care Unit at Johns Hopkins Hospital (JHH). He is also heavily involved in medical education and is currently an Associate Program Director for the Johns Hopkins Bayview Internal Medicine residency program and Co-Director of the Global Health Pathway, which also includes the Johns Hopkins Hospital Osler Internal Medicine residency program. For both residency programs, he has helped to increase their



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nationally recognized reputation for excellence by championing curricular innovations, resident scholarly work, and resident academic careers.

Dr. Zakaria earned his undergraduate degree from Pennsylvania State University, his medical degree from Jefferson Medical College, and his Master of Public Health degree from the University of Maryland. He trained at Thomas Jefferson University Hospital in Internal Medicine and practiced there as a faculty attending for one year. He then completed a fellowship in cardiovascular disease at the University of Maryland and subsequently a Critical Care Medicine fellowship at the University of California San Francisco. He joined the Johns Hopkins faculty in 2008.