

BRIDGING THE DIGITAL DIVIDE:

LEVERAGING TECHNOLOGY AND DATA FOR HEALTH EQUITY

46th Annual Minority Health Conference



February 28, 2025

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CONFERENCE HISTORY

When the Minority Health Conference was established in 1977 by the Black Student Caucus (now Minority Student Caucus), its major objectives were to highlight the health issues among people of color. Since then, it has broadened to include other minority populations. Initially, the conference was held in the School of Public Health's Rosenau Auditorium on the University of North Carolina (UNC) at Chapel Hill campus, but when conference attendance increased from 300 to 400 during the 1990s, the conference moved to the William and Ida Friday Continuing Education Center. Thousands of UNC students and advisors have contributed to the planning of the conferences. However, the three pillars of the conference — Dr. Bill C. Jenkins, Dean William T. Small Jr., and Dr. Victor J. Schoenbach — are honored for their significant contributions.



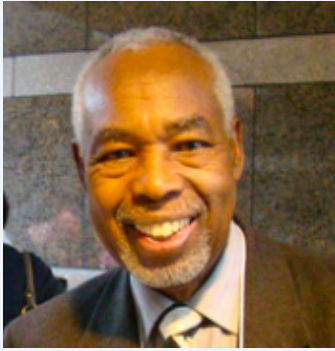
In 1977, Dr. Bill C. Jenkins, a former UNC student, led the Black Student Caucus to create the conference. Dr. Jenkins was an extraordinary public health leader, a lifelong advocate for addressing racism and eliminating health disparities, and an enthusiast for building ethnic minorities in biostatistics and epidemiology. Dr. Jenkins has contributed to many groundbreaking initiatives in the field of public health. While working at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), he serves as manager of minority health activities in the office of the CDC Director and as manager of the

Tuskegee Participants Health Benefits Program, which assured medical services to survivors of the Tuskegee Study. Dr. Jenkins was one of the first public health scientists to investigate HIV/AIDS in African Americans and served as Manager of the CDC's National Minority Organizations HIV Prevention Program. He founded Morehouse College's Public Health Sciences Institute and Project IMHOTEP. These two initiatives have been a source for recruiting underrepresented minorities to the public health profession. Dr. Jenkins returned to Chapel Hill in 2010 as a senior scholar at the UNC Institute of African American Research; in 2014, he became an adjunct instructor in the UNC Gillings Department of Epidemiology.

His passing in 2019 was a deep loss for many at the Gillings School, given its proximity to the School's 40th-anniversary Minority Health Conference. Dr. Jenkins stressed the significance of knowing and valuing the history of public health and its treatment (and mistreatment) of minority populations. As a pioneer and phenomenal educator, he taught the importance of investing in people and not exploiting them. We honor his legacy and vision for the conference by continuing to use our skills, passions and talents to work on behalf of marginalized communities and remembering how words and data can be tools for social change.



CONFERENCE HISTORY



In 1971, William T. Small Jr. came to the UNC School of Public Health as coordinator of minority affairs with the charge to increase minority student enrollment in the School's graduate programs. He later became Assistant Dean for Students and then Associate Dean for Students. For more than 25 years, Dean Small worked on behalf of public health students as well as faculty, staff and administrators. Students involved in the conference's early years describe how Dean Small pulled the conference together — identifying people, shepherding conference activities, and gathering feedback.

Each year, a new group of students would organize a successful conference, and Dean Small was a constant force who made that possible. A member of the 1991 Conference Planning Committee recounted, “Bill Small's diverse and masterful contributions [...] his advice, experience, judgment and commitment — as well as large amounts of his time and energy — were indispensable to the Conference's success. The Dean's Office could not have been represented more effectively, diplomatically and graciously.” Dean William Roper named the Keynote Lecture after William T. Small Jr. in 1999, the same year of his retirement from UNC. Dean Small passed in April 2021, shortly after the 42nd Minority Health Conference.



In 1980, Dr. Victor J. Schoenbach joined the UNC Gillings faculty in the Department of Epidemiology. From 1998 to 2018, he led the UNC School of Public Health Minority Health Project, which presents interactive broadcasts on health equity topics and works with the Minority Student Caucus on its annual Minority Health Conference and webcast. In 1991, Dr. Schoenbach worked with then Assistant Dean Small to revive the Minority Health Conference after a two-year hiatus and continued to work with the conference planning committee until his retirement. Dr. Schoenbach served as a faculty advisor to the Minority Student Caucus from 2004 until 2018,

and he helped to initiate the interactive Keynote Lecture broadcast and the partner conferences. He continues to maintain websites for the Minority Student Caucus and the Minority Health Conference. From 2014 to 2017, Dr. Schoenbach taught a seminar with Dr. Jenkins on social justice in public health and created a “virtual library” on the history of minority health activities at UNC in conjunction with the course. In 2012, the Minority Health Conference's afternoon keynote lecture was named the “1st annual Victor J. Schoenbach Health Disparities Keynote Lecture” in recognition of Dr. Schoenbach's commitment to minority health in the community.

The Minority Health Conference is eternally grateful for the leadership and unwavering service of Dr. Jenkins, Dean Small, and Dr. Schoenbach to advancing the health of marginalized people and eliminating health inequities and racial injustices — work embedded in the mission of the Minority Student Caucus and the conference. The Minority Student Caucus is honored that the names of these health equity champions are woven into the history and legacy of the caucus and conference.

MINORITY STUDENT CAUCUS

The Minority Student Caucus (MSC) was initially founded as the Black Student Caucus in 1971 by a group of Black students at the UNC School of Public Health. The founding members of the caucus created this organization to increase the attention given to health disparities while also advocating for recruitment, support and retention of Black students and faculty at the School. Over the years, the caucus used several names but eventually settled on “Minority Student Caucus” in late 1977, to ensure that all students of color would know they were welcome.

Today, MSC consists of all students of color at Gillings who wish to join and anyone else who is interested in supporting the caucus’s mission. Since its founding, MSC has been charged with bringing the concerns of people of color to the attention of the School’s administration and with working to attract and retain more students and faculty of color. Further, the Minority Student caucus promotes research, policies and programs aimed at addressing public health issues that affect people of color.

The Minority Student Caucus founded the Minority Health Conference (MHC) in 1977 and has conducted it nearly every year since. The caucus works with the Gillings community on all levels to advocate for the needs of students of color by developing strategic partnerships and advocating for change. As a member of the Dean’s Council at the Gillings School of Global Public Health, MSC is able to have meaningful dialogue with various members of the School’s administration in promoting the success and well-being of students of color. To accomplish the initiatives of increasing and promoting racial and health equity, the primary goals for MSC are the following:

- To increase recruitment, intake and retention of students and faculty of color
- To ensure the employment of an antiracism focus in the Gillings curriculum
- To develop strategic partnerships across campus and in the community
- To create sustained mechanisms and resources that provide support to students of color

The Minority Student Caucus welcomes you to our 45th Minority Health Conference and we hope you will join us on this journey toward achieving racial and health equity.



AMERICAN PUBLIC HEALTH ASSOCIATION ENDORSEMENT



AMERICAN PUBLIC HEALTH ASSOCIATION
For science. For action. For health.

January 13, 2025

Dear UNC Minority Health Conference Participants:

On behalf of more than 50,000 individual and affiliate members, the American Public Health Association extends warmest wishes to the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill Gillings School of Global Public Health on another successful year organizing the annual Minority Health Conference.

Congratulations to the Minority Student Caucus, Minority Health Conference Co-Chairs, planning committee, advisors, and all others involved in coordinating the 46th annual Minority Health Conference. Our values at APHA are an extension of our members' beliefs and include science and evidence-based decision making, prevention and wellness, community, and health equity—all of which are reflected in the work of the Minority Health Conference. For these reasons, APHA proudly endorses this year's Minority Health Conference.

The University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill Gillings School of Global Public Health is a tier-one research institution, and the involvement of students is what makes Gillings great. The Minority Health Conference perfectly encapsulates the institution's dedication to its students. As the longest-running student-led health conference in the nation, the Minority Health Conference continues to bring salient public health topics to a community of students, researchers, and practitioners. This year's theme, "Bridging the Digital Divide: Leveraging Technology and Data for Health Equity" is both timely and necessary to everyone in the field of public health. I hope you will be able to gain valuable tools and information to help create healthier communities inclusive of all persons.

Congratulations again to all the hard-working students and supporters of the Minority Student Caucus!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Georges C. Benjamin".

Georges C. Benjamin, M.D.
Executive Director

800 I Street, NW • Washington, DC 20001-3710
202-777-2742 • www.apha.org

2025 PLANNING COMMITTEE

Conference Co-Chairs

Justin Wang
Mercy Adekola

Minority Student Caucus Co-Presidents

Pilar Sharp
Verdant Julius

Planning Committee Coordinators

Molade Otusheso
Godspower Mercy Lawal

Communications Committee

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Wehazit Mussie*
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Jennie Harper
OJ McGhee
Patsy Polston
Gemma Herrera
Aja Martindale

*Denotes Committee Co-Chair



CONFERENCE THEME

The Minority Health Conference, which is the largest and longest-running student-led health conference in the United States, aims to raise awareness around minority health and mobilize students, academics and community members to take action for change. The conference was founded and is led by students at the Gillings School of Global Public Health at UNC-Chapel Hill.

We are excited to announce this year's theme:

BRIDGING THE DIGITAL DIVIDE: LEVERAGING TECHNOLOGY AND DATA FOR HEALTH EQUITY

This year's conference focuses on the transformative potential of technology and data in addressing health disparities. While technological innovations hold great promise for improving access to care, they often risk amplifying inequities when not designed with marginalized communities in mind. This theme emphasizes that equity must be centered and included within these technological advancements. The conference will highlight innovators and researchers that are intentionally inclusive in the way they are designing public health interventions and solutions.

The Minority Health Conference addresses this theme by focusing on developing responsible, accessible, and inclusive digital health solutions. Minority populations often face barriers to technology, and seldom find technology designed with their needs in mind. This issue is compounded by the lack of technological data on minority populations, which limits researchers and innovators. While AI has great potential in public health, it is crucial that AI systems are trained with inclusive data. The Keynote addresses and accompanying break out sessions will explore how data can reveal health disparities rooted in systemic biases and emphasize the need for inclusive data-driven research. By leveraging these tools, we can engineer systems and design research that serve all populations equitably.

This year's conference will examine digital access as a "super determinant" of health outcomes, highlighting strategies to bridge the digital divide and ensure that all communities can benefit from advancements in public health. We hope that this theme inspires actionable strategies towards leveraging technology and data to drive health equity, ensuring that no community is left behind in the pursuit of better health outcomes.

WELCOME LETTER FROM CONFERENCE CO-CHAIRS

Dear Conference Attendees,

On behalf of the Minority Student Caucus, the Minority Health Conference Planning Committee, and the Gillings School of Global Public Health, we welcome you to the 46th Annual Minority Health Conference.

In 1971, the Minority Student Caucus was founded to draw attention to health inequities and to support students of color here at UNC Gillings School of Global Public Health. Six years later, the Minority Health Conference was established, and it has become the annual hallmark event of the Caucus. Nearly every year since 1977, we have convened thousands of community members, professionals, and students to address health disparities and to reshape a more equitable society for minority health. Together, we connect multidisciplinary champions working at the local, regional, national, and global levels - and support communities everywhere.

This year's theme -Bridging the Digital Divide: Leveraging Technology and Data for Health Equity-highlights the transformative role that digital advancements can play in improving health outcomes for marginalized communities. While technology has the power to revolutionize access, we must also recognize the widening disparities that arise when digital tools, internet access, and data-driven innovations remain out of reach for many. By addressing these gaps, we can ensure that digital health solutions are designed with equity at their core, rather than reinforcing existing barriers.

The urgency of these conversations has only grown in light of recent events at UNC and beyond. The campus community has witnessed significant activism related to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) efforts, reflecting a broader national struggle for racial and social justice. As public health advocates, we must acknowledge the critical role that DEI plays in shaping policies, research, and community-based solutions that impact minority health. The voices of students, faculty, and activists demanding justice serve as a reminder that health equity is inextricably linked to broader systemic changes.

We would like to thank Dean Nancy Messonnier and the Dean's Office at the Gillings School of Global Public Health for their continued support. To our advisors: Chandra Caldwell, Matthew Chamberlin, Gemma Herrera, O.J. McGhee, Ryan McGuirt, Patsy Polston, Kim Ramsey-White, Jennie Harper, Charletta Sims Evans, and Cherelle Whitefield, we are eternally grateful for your guidance and unwavering support as we navigated the planning process.

We have immense gratitude for the incredible planning committee and leadership team who have worked tirelessly to bring this conference to life. Organizing an event of this magnitude is no small feat, and their dedication ensures that we can continue fostering



WELCOME LETTER FROM CONFERENCE CO-CHAIRS

meaningful dialogue and action. We also extend our appreciation to our sponsors and supporters who have helped sustain this conference year after year.

Finally, to all of you—our attendees, speakers, panelists, and presenters—we thank you for your commitment to racial justice and health equity. Your participation and passion are what make this conference a space for learning, connection, and advocacy. We hope that this year’s discussions inspire new collaborations, challenge existing frameworks, and push us closer to a future where technology and data serve as a bridge rather than a barrier.

With gratitude,



Mercy Adekola
Department of Environmental
Sciences & Engineering
Minority Health Conference Co-Chair



Justin Wang
Department of Biostatistics
Minority Health Conference Co-Chair

FIRST AMENDMENT STATEMENT FROM THE UNIVERSITY

All sponsored speaking engagements at the University fall under the protection of free speech laws and policies. The University is governed by the U.S. Constitution’s First Amendment, the North Carolina Restore Free Speech Act, enacted by the General Assembly in 2017, and the campus Facilities Use Policy. Additionally, providing a free speech forum for a range of ideas is part of the UNC Gillings School of Global Public Health’s commitment to inclusion.

We would like to remind everyone attending the conference to please remain respectful of fellow attendees and our speakers. Individuals who disrupt the event by interfering with the protected rights of attendees or speakers will be asked to leave.



We want to hear from you.

Scan the QR code to send us your conference feedback.

CONFERENCE AGENDA (MORNING)

7:30 a.m.

Conference Check-in

9:00 a.m.

Opening Remarks | Location: Grumman Auditorium

UNC Gillings Minority Health Conference Co-Chairs Welcome
Mercy Adekola and Justin Wang

Indigenous Land and Black Body Acknowledgements

Pilar Sharp and Verdant Julius, UNC Gillings MSC Co-Presidents
UNC Gillings School of Global Public Health Remarks

Dr. Nancy Messonnier, Dean and Bryson Distinguished Professor
UNC Office of the Provost Remarks

Vice Provost Leah Cox

9:30 a.m.

**William T. Small Jr. Keynote Speaker | Location:
Grumman Auditorium**

Dr. Fay Cobb Payton

Moderators: Mercy Adekola and Justin Wang

10:15 a.m.

Keynote Q&A Session

10:45 a.m.

**Exhibitors and Posters | Location: Atrium & Willow
Lounge**

11:15 a.m.

Morning Breakout Sessions

Engaging Underserved Communities in Digital Health Literacy
Speakers: Angela Harris, Veronica Creech, Gwenn Weaver - Location: Sunflower

Choosing Between Health and Home: How Telehealth Saves
Trans Patients Legislation

Speaker: Casey Buisson - Location: Mountain Laurel

AI at the Frontlines: Overcoming Barriers to Promote Health
Equity in Mobile Health Clinics

Speakers: Jean Davison, Carmen Pierce, Maureen Bake - Location: Dogwood

My AI Life (M.AI.L): Evaluating AI Tools for Personal and
Community Health

Speakers: Melissa Haithcox-Dennis, Reeshemah Johnson, Taijah Bennett -
Location: Redbud



CONFERENCE AGENDA (AFTERNOON)

12:15 p.m. Lunch

1:30 p.m.

Victor J. Schoenbach Keynote Speaker | Location: Grumman Auditorium

Dr. Ivor Braden Horn

Moderators: Molade Otusheso and Jordana Rockley

2:15 p.m.

Keynote Q&A Session

2:45 p.m.

Exhibitors and Posters | Location: Atrium & Willow Lounge

3:30 p.m.

Afternoon Breakout Sessions

Transforming Agricultural Worker Health: Insights from A Statewide Community Assessment and Exploration of Structural Interventions to Promote Digital Inclusion

Speakers: Lilibeth Andres Benitez and Natalie Rivera - Location: Sunflower

From Bias to Breakthrough: Ensuring AI Advances Health Equity for All

Speaker: Shakira Grant - Location: Dogwood

Connections: Communities, Providers and Funding

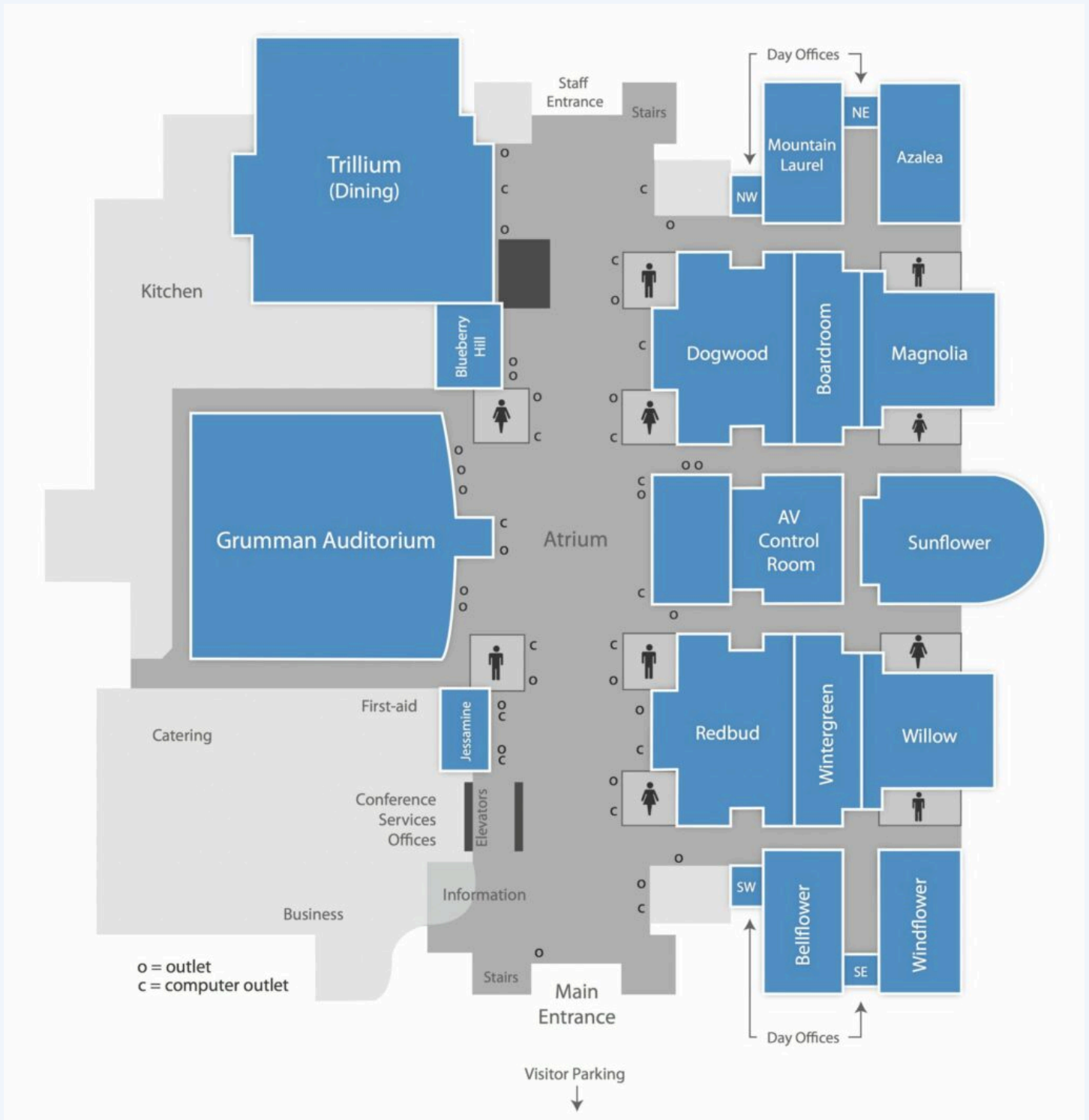
Opportunities to Build a Digitally Equitable and Sustainable Infrastructure in NC

Speakers: Maggie Sauer and Annette Taylor - Location: Redbud

Think of Them as Somebody Who's Not Able to Hold a Secret: Emerging Security and Privacy Concerns in LLM-based Mental Health Support

Speaker: Jabari Kwesi - Location: Mountain Laurel

FRIDAY CONFERENCE CENTER MAP



KEYNOTE SPEAKERS

27th William T. Small Jr. Keynote Speaker: **DR. FAY COBB PAYTON**



Fay Cobb Payton, Ph.D., MBA is an award-winning researcher, international speaker and entrepreneur. She is a Special Advisor to the Chancellor for Innovation, a Full Professor of Mathematics and Computer Science at Rutgers University - Newark, and an affiliate faculty in the Rutgers New Jersey Medical School. She is the inaugural director of the Institute for Data, Research, and Innovation Science (IDRIS) at Rutgers University - Newark.

She is also a Professor Emerita and a former Full Professor of Information Technology/Analytics at North Carolina State University. She completed a rotation as a Program Director at the National Science Foundation where she initiated the Computer

and Information Science and Engineering Research Expansion Program and worked on several initiatives, such as Smart Health and Biomedical Research in the Era of Artificial Intelligence and Advanced Data Science; AI Fairness, Equity, Accountability & Transparency; and Research Expansion and Cloud Computing with partnerships with Amazon, Google and Microsoft. She received the NSF Director's Award during her rotation at the agency.

She serves on several boards and committees, including the National Academies of Science, Engineering and Medicine, National Artificial Intelligence Research Resource Pilot, North Carolina A&T University Board of Visitors, Georgia Institute of Technology Industrial & Systems Engineering Advisory, Association for Computing Machinery, Clark Atlanta STEM United and others. She has published over 150 peer-reviewed journal articles, conference publications and book chapters on topics of data quality, AI bias/ethics, healthcare and innovation.

Dr. Payton has worked as an engineer, developer and consultant. She is a Forbes AI Contributor and author of *Leveraging Intersectionality: Seeing and Not Seeing*. She earned her Ph.D. in Information and Decision Systems from Case Western Reserve University with an emphasis in Health Systems, an MBA in Decision Science from Clark Atlanta University, a BS in Industrial and Systems Engineering from Georgia Institute of Technology, and a BA in Accounting from Clark Atlanta University.

KEYNOTE SPEAKERS

14th Victor J. Schoenbach Keynote Speaker: **DR. IVOR BRADEN HORN**



Ivor Braden Horn, MD, MPH is an advisor, investor, physician and technology executive with experience in entrepreneurial, venture, academic medicine, health system and research organizations. She is an internationally recognized leader in health equity, social determinants of health, and healthcare innovation having spoken to diverse audiences as the National Academies of Science, Engineering and Medicine (NASEM), FDA, the Atlantic Festival, the World Health Summit, HLTH (US & Europe), SXSW, and Cannes Lion.

Most recently, she served as the founding director and first Chief Health Equity Officer at Google, where she spearheaded company-wide strategy to develop, launch and scale health equity within research and product development to ensure they were diverse, fair, accessible and inclusive. While at Google, she also led a study to develop the HEAL (Health Equity Assessment of machine Learning performance) framework to quantitatively assess the performance equity of health AI technologies. The HEAL framework is a methodology to assess whether health AI technologies prioritise performance for patient populations experiencing worse outcomes, that is complementary to existing fairness metrics.

Prior to her role at Google, Dr. Horn served as Chief Medical Officer at Accolade (acquired by Transcarent). Before Accolade, she served as Medical Director of the Center for Diversity and Health Equity at Seattle Children's Hospital, and Professor of Pediatrics at the University of Washington School of Medicine. She holds an MD and MPH and has authored several peer-reviewed journal publications on health communication and health equity.

Dr. Horn currently serves on the boards of Boston Children's Hospital, Care Academy and Acclinate.



MORNING BREAKOUT SESSIONS OVERVIEW

1)

Engaging Underserved Communities in Digital Health Literacy

Speakers: Angela Harris, Veronica Creech and Gwenn Weaver
Location: Sunflower

2)

Choosing Between Health and Home: How Telehealth Saves Trans Patients Legislation

Speaker: Casey Buisson
Location: Mountain Laurel

3)

AI at the Frontlines: Overcoming Barriers to Promote Health Equity in Mobile Health Clinics

Speakers: Jean Davison, Carmen Pierce, Maureen Baker
Location: Dogwood

4)

My AI Life (M.AI.L): Evaluating AI Tools for Personal and Community Health

Speakers: Melissa Haithcox-Dennis, Reeshemah Johnson, and Taijah Bennett
Location: Redbud

AFTERNOON BREAKOUT SESSIONS OVERVIEW

5)

Transforming Agricultural Worker Health: Insights from A Statewide Community Assessment and Exploration of Structural Interventions to Promote Digital Inclusion

Speakers: Lilibeth Andres Benitez and Natalie Rivera
Location: Sunflower

6)

From Bias to Breakthrough: Ensuring AI Advances Health Equity for All

Speaker: Shakira Grant
Location: Dogwood

7)

Connections: Communities, Providers and Funding Opportunities to Build a Digitally Equitable and Sustainable Infrastructure in NC

Speakers: Maggie Sauer and Annette Taylorn
Location: Redbud

8)

Think of Them as Somebody Who's Not Able to Hold a Secret: Emerging Security and Privacy Concerns in LLM-based Mental Health Support

Speaker: Jabari Kwesi
Location: Mountain Laurel



MORNING BREAKOUT SESSION ONE

1)

Engaging Underserved Communities in Digital Health Literacy



Angela Harris



Veronica Creech



Gwenn Weaver

Speakers: Angela Harris, Veronica Creech and Gwenn Weaver
Location: Sunflower

Empowered communities can play an integral role in advancing digital health literacy. This breakout session will examine the importance of fostering trust, accessibility, and education to equip individuals with the skills to navigate digital health tools, interpret data, and make informed decisions. Leading practitioners will share examples of how collaborative efforts combined with localized support, such as digital navigators, technology partners, and place-based workshops, ensure cultural relevance and inclusivity. Participants will leave with an awareness of effective communication and innovative approaches to curriculum that prioritize an individual's capacity for wellness self-monitoring and improve one's ability to advocate for their own health.

MORNING BREAKOUT SESSION TWO

2)

Choosing Between Health and Home: How Telehealth Saves Trans Patients Legislation



Speaker: Casey Buisson

Location: Mountain Laurel

Barring transgender people from accessing healthcare has been on the rise, especially in the Deep South, forcing many of them to choose between staying in a place where they are at risk or moving to a completely new area. Telehealth offers a unique third option that has the potential to save countless lives and livelihoods, as long as providers are willing to make the leap. Care providers do not have to be experts on the trans experience or every nuanced identity, but a basic understanding of what it means and a respect for their patients' choices is all it takes to get started.



MORNING BREAKOUT SESSION THREE

3)

AI at the Frontlines: Overcoming Barriers to Promote Health Equity in Mobile Health Clinics



Jean Davison



Carmen Pierce



Maureen Baker

Speakers: Jean Davison, Carmen Pierce, Maureen Baker

Location: Dogwood

This session explores how nurses are leveraging AI to enhance operations at a free nurse-led mobile health clinic serving vulnerable populations while addressing barriers such as accessibility, data security, accuracy, user-friendliness, staff training, and data security. AI-powered translation tools bridge language gaps, enabling culturally sensitive communication with patients from diverse and vulnerable backgrounds. Personalized AI-driven evidence-based educational materials address health literacy challenges, empowering patients to engage in their health and make informed decisions. The session will include live demonstrations of how nurses use AI-driven tools to identify healthy weight, BMI and counsel with evidence-based recommendations translated into multiple languages. It will also focus on staff training strategies to effectively integrate AI into clinic workflows, ensuring its practical application in a resource-limited setting to address pediatric and adolescent health, including BMI, eating habits, physical activity, and screen time education. Additionally, safeguarding patient data is a priority, with robust measures in place to protect sensitive information and maintain trust. Attendees will learn how AI helps identify service gaps in patient education, optimize resource allocation, and streamline clinic operations, ultimately improving health outcomes. This session will provide actionable insights on implementing secure and inclusive AI solutions to bridge the digital divide and promote health equity in underserved communities.

MORNING BREAKOUT SESSION FOUR

4)

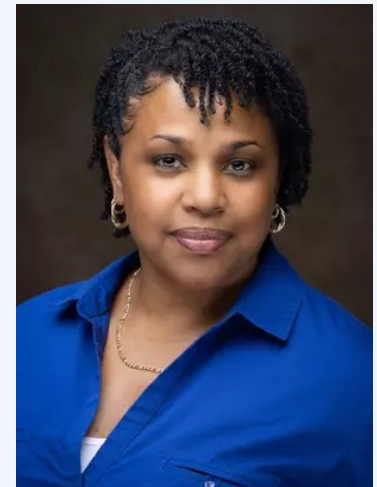
My AI Life (M.AI.L): Evaluating AI Tools for Personal and Community Health



Melissa Haithcox-Dennis



Taijah Bennett



Reeshemah Johnson

Speakers: Melissa Haithcox-Dennis, Reeshemah Johnson and Taijah Bennett

Location: Redbud

Artificial intelligence (AI) tools shape our lives, from fitness apps to mental health check-ins. Despite AI ubiquity, there are few tools for the everyday user to determine whether a tool is safe, unbiased, and protects privacy. “My AI Life” (M .AI. L) is an interactive session that introduces an innovative strategy for raising awareness about the impact of AI tools on personal health and how individual AI use can affect the larger community’s health. Through hands-on activities, participants will explore AI tools in public health, discuss challenges like bias, privacy, and misinformation, and examine current industry efforts to address these concerns. Participants will learn how to protect their M .AI. L using an AI stamp, consider how individual AI use impacts the broader community’s health, and brainstorm ways to advocate for AI systems that prioritize equity. By the end of the workshop, participants will be able to list current uses of AI in public health, explain the importance of evaluating AI tools for transparency, bias, and information quality, explain how “stamps” can be a simple visual tool to assess health-related AI tools, and brainstorm strategies to achieve a “first-class” AI life.



AFTERNOON BREAKOUT SESSION FIVE

5)

Transforming Agricultural Worker Health: Insights from A Statewide Community Assessment and Exploration of Structural Interventions to Promote Digital Inclusion



Lilibeth Andres Benitez



Natalie Rivera

Speakers: Lilibeth Andres Benitez and Natalie Rivera

Location: Sunflower

This presentation includes findings from a comprehensive community-led assessment (conducted from March 2024 to November 2024) on digital inclusion, involving farmworkers, community health workers, healthcare providers, and other key partners. We will share what we learned from 213 listening session participants and 335 survey respondents from across the state of North Carolina. During the presentation, we will delve into their perspectives on utilization, benefits, and limitations of digital tools such as QR codes and email, telehealth, and patient portals. We'll introduce the concept of structural factors impacting farmworker health, focusing on access to the internet and digital inclusion. As an example, we will consider how structural factors like policies and occupation influences make it more difficult to manage chronic conditions such as diabetes, hypertension, and mental health issues. Attendees will (1) gain an understanding of the role of structural interventions in promoting health equity, (2) be able to describe a model for state agency and academic partnership in research to improve health, and (3) develop strategies for addressing factors identified in the assessment through an interactive activity.

AFTERNOON BREAKOUT SESSION SIX

6)

From Bias to Breakthrough: Ensuring AI Advances Health Equity for All



Speaker: Shakira Grant
Location: Dogwood

As artificial intelligence (AI) rapidly shapes the future of healthcare, it holds immense promise for improving access, outcomes, and overall health equity. Yet, without thoughtful design and oversight, AI can unintentionally reinforce existing disparities and biases in care delivery. This talk will provide an overview of how AI systems learn, where hidden biases emerge, and why these issues matter for all patients—especially those from historically underrepresented groups. Drawing on real-world examples, we will explore the potential of AI-driven tools to enhance early disease detection, tailor treatments to individual patient needs, and support community-based care models. Just as importantly, we will examine the safeguards needed to ensure that these technologies serve everyone equitably. By highlighting policies, community engagement strategies, and best practices for fairness and transparency, this presentation will empower participants to think critically and collaboratively about a more just and inclusive healthcare future.



AFTERNOON BREAKOUT SESSION SEVEN

7)

Connections: Communities, Providers and Funding Opportunities to Build a Digitally Equitable and Sustainable Infrastructure in NC



Annette Taylor



Maggie Sauer

Speakers: Maggie Sauer and Annette Taylor

Location: Redbud

The session is intended to outline the goals and progress of Digital Equity and Telehealth programs funded by NC DHHS Office of Rural Health and the NC Dept of Information Technology's Office of Digital Equity and Literacy in the Division of Broadband and Digital Equity. Leveraging the services and resources from both offices provides opportunities for communities, individuals and organizations to come together to create solutions to overcome the Digital Divide. The presentation will detail grantee progress, provide information to allow attendees to partner with funded organizations and discuss how the work aligns with the NC Digital Equity Plan to support Digital Equity and increase access to digital resources and services supporting the social drivers of health.

AFTERNOON BREAKOUT SESSION EIGHT

8)

Think of Them as Somebody Who's Not Able to Hold a Secret: Emerging Security and Privacy Concerns in LLM-based Mental Health Support



Speaker: Jabari Kwesi

Location: Mountain Laurel

Individuals across the United States are increasingly using general-purpose LLM-based conversational agents (e.g., ChatGPT, Claude, Copilot) to support their mental wellness. Through in-depth interviews with a sample of 21 participants, we uncovered that users rely on these tools to fill gaps in access to traditional and culturally competent mental health care. This newfound accessibility comes with significant apprehensions: participants feared privacy violations, data misuse, and lack of regulatory safeguards, especially given the sensitive nature of their mental health disclosures. Across the board, participants desired greater transparency in privacy policies, dynamic security and privacy features, and guidance tailored to using these tools in a mental health context; they communicated an urgent need for ethical guidelines and regulatory frameworks that acknowledge the sensitivity of mental health disclosures. I present a series of user-centric findings to inform the development of secure and empathetic LLM-driven mental health support, bridging current gaps in care without compromising user trust or well-being.



POSTERS

**Poster presentations will be held in Willow Lounge.
Morning: 10:45 - 11:15 a.m | Afternoon: 2:45 - 3:30 p.m.**

Note: Posters will be available to view throughout the day of the conference.

The Digital Buzz: Advancing Digital Equity in Rural Eastern North Carolina Through Barber, Beauty Shops and Faith Communities, Grounded in Diffusion of Innovation

Chiquitta Lesene, MS, CEO - Shackle Free Community Outreach Agency

Chronic Disease Management, Telehealth, and the Impact of Digital Deserts in Rural North Carolina

Iyana M. Beachem, BS, Strategic Prevention Coordinator
Martin-Tyrrell-Washington District Health Department

Empowering Underserved Communities: Bridging the Digital Divide for Health Equity in Eastern North Carolina

Leslie Sanchez, BS, Project Manager
ECU College of Health and Human Performance

Findings from Formative Focus Group Discussions and Pretesting of a Virtual Platform to Enhance Social Interaction and Group Learning Among Young Black Women

Isa M. van der Drift, BA
UNC Gillings School of Global Public Health

POSTERS

Bridging the Digital Divide: DELP's Model for Digital Equity through Community Partnerships

Kenyari Fields, BS; Christopher Lawson, MS; Patrice Walker, MS; Siobahn Day Grady, PhD - North Carolina Central University

AI-driven Tools Utilized in Health Equity Research

Leatrice Martin, MBA, Community Engagement Core Lead - North Carolina Central University RCMC Center for Health Disparities Research

From Silence to Exclusion: The Erasure of Race in Reports of Interpersonal Violence in Brazil

Natan David Pereira, MSN - State University of Maringá

Developing a Suicide Prevention Survey Instrument & Communications Campaign Media

Albert Chow, BS, MPH Candidate - UNC Asheville/UNC Gillings School of Global Public Health, Place-Based Concentration

How to conduct an electronic Strengths and Needs assessment with Latino immigrants.

Sarai Ordonez, BSPH, CHES - Camino Research Institute



POSTERS

Hybrid Long COVID Community Education in Rural Eastern North Carolina

Jessica A. Roe, MPH - North Carolina Community Engagement Alliance, UNC Center for Health Equity Research

Expanding Healthcare Access in Rural Sub-Saharan Africa

Sanjana Anand, Victoria Ayodele - Duke University

Utilizing technology to establish a telemedicine Maternal Fetal Medicine (MFM) clinic to reduce health care gaps and improve maternal health outcomes for rural patients

Lynell Hodges, MPH, Ana Gonzalez, BA - Piedmont Health Services

Health Communication and Engagement Preference Among Black, Hispanic, Native American and Mandarin Speaking Communities in North Carolina.

Courtney McMillian, MPH - UNC Chapel Hill

POSTERS

Skin Cancer Awareness and Preventative Measures

Urvi Patel, BS - UNC-Chapel Hill, Department of Psychology and Neuroscience

Language Disparities and Patient Retention in North Carolina: A Pre-and Post-Pandemic Analysis at a Rural Federally Qualified Health Center

Ngan H. Le, BS - UNC-Chapel Hill, Piedmont Health Services

Technological Interventions at a Rural Federally Qualified Health Center to Improve Coordination of Early Childhood Developmental Services

Maliha I. Bhuiyan, BSPH - Medserve Fellow, Piedmont Health Services

Characterizing the Objective Features of Vaping Prevention Video Ads: A Content Analysis

Bonjoo Gu, MA - UNC-Chapel Hill, Hussman School of Journalism and Media



POSTERS

Nurses at the Forefront: Bridging the Digital Divide for Better Health Outcomes

Devarayasamudram Sujayalakshmi, PhD, M.Phil, MSN, RN, ACUE.
Associate Professor, North Carolina Central University

Addressing Pulse Oximeter Disparities: Bridging the Digital Divide to Improve Health Equity

Robert Osei - Livingstone College

Viral Voices: Examining Maternal Mistreatment in U.S. Healthcare Through Social Media Stories

Sha'Dasia Reynolds, Angelica Pierce, Celeste Lee, PhD,
Spelman College

CommunityRx - Cardiovascular Disease, an E-Linked Community Resource Referral System in a Rural NC Federally Qualified Healthcare Clinic

Abhinav Mukku, BA, Social/Clinical Research Assistant - UNC Center for Health Equity Research

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NOTES



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