

Speaker Bios (Listed Alphabetically)



Moazzum Bajwa, MD, MPH

Champion Provider Fellow, Riverside County

Dr. Moazzum Bajwa is a family physician and core faculty at RUHS/UCR Family Medicine Residency, leading the program's Community Health & Social Medicine initiative. He directs the "Healthy Eating and Lifestyle Promotion" (H.E.L.P.) Program, a longitudinal curriculum in which resident physicians empower local high school students with skills and resources to advocate for healthy change in their communities. Dr. Bajwa believes in achieving health equity through community engagement and collaboration; he currently serves as principal investigator for two interdisciplinary research groups through the Center for Health Disparities Research at UCR School of Medicine, as well as faculty advisor for the UCR Street

Medicine Initiative.



Muriel Bañares Miller*

Brown-Miller Communications

A veteran communications expert specializing in consumer health education and multicultural communications, Muriel develops and manages integrated communications campaigns aimed at educating consumers, and changing and improving behaviors. She directs audience research, discerns areas of opportunity and crafts unique strategies to influence and educate specific audience segments. In many cases, this means addressing varying language and cultural issues among key populations and sub-populations. Her execution of the award-winning comprehensive social marketing

campaign, Steps to a Healthier Salinas, resulted in groundbreaking and lasting health improvements.



Barry Chang, DDS

Champion Provider Fellow, Yolo County

Dr. Barry Chang is a general practice dentist, who after initially starting in private practice, now serves as the dental director for CommuniCare Health Center, a federally qualified health center in Yolo County. He has served in this role for the past 10 years. At CommuniCare, they have an outreach team, Smile Savers, that goes out to community sites (schools, health fairs, Head Start programs, WIC classes, migrant camps, and special needs programs) to do oral health education, provide nutrition/diet recommendations, screening, fluoride application and sealants placement. In addition to his clinical work, he is also a member of the California

Primary Care Association (CPCA) Dental Director Network group, chair of the Redwood Community Health Coalition Dental Director Network group, and a member of the Yolo County Oral Health Coalition which allows him to work closely with the county staff and leadership.



Gail Gazelle, MD, MCC

Harvard Medical School

Dr. Gazelle is a former hospice physician, part-time Harvard Medical School Assistant Professor, and Master Certified Coach for physicians. After working in the field of end-of-life care for most of her career, Dr. Gazelle shifted her focus to another vulnerable population: physicians in the modern American healthcare system. By phone and in person, Dr. Gazelle has coached over 500 physicians and physician leaders on leadership development, communication, teamwork, conflict management, mindfulness to build resilience, and emotional intelligence. Dr. Gazelle's passion is in providing physicians the resilience skills not covered in training that make the difference between burnout and surviving the marathon of a medical career. A long-time mindfulness practitioner and educator, Dr. Gazelle is a certified mindfulness meditation teacher with world-renowned teachers Tara Brach and Jack Kornfield. Dr. Gazelle is the author of 2020 *Everyday Resilience. A Practical Guide to Build Inner Strength and Weather Life's Challenges*. Her work has been featured in as diverse venues as the New England Journal of Medicine and O, the Oprah Magazine.



Jayanth Kumar, DDS, MPH (invited)

California Department of Public Health, Office of Oral Health

Dr. Kumar is State Dental Director in the California Department of Public Health. He is a board certified specialist in dental public health and a former director and president of the American Board of Dental Public Health. Before joining the California Department of Public Health, he was state dental director in New York where he held multiple positions. He has served as a consultant to many national and international organizations including the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC), National Institute of Dental & Craniofacial Research, NIH, Health Resources Services Administration (HRSA), the American Dental Association (ADA), Health Canada, and the National Academies' National Research Council (NRC). He led the efforts in California to develop the California Oral Health Plan. He is currently engaged in implementing the 2016 Tobacco Tax Oral Health Initiative and assisting the California Department of Health Care Services in implementing the Medical 2020 Dental Transformation Initiative.



Michael J. Miller, BS*

Brown-Miller Communications

As president and founder of the cause-oriented public relations agency Brown-Miller Communications, Michael has spent the last 25 years working with the media, the public and policymakers to help shape public opinion and motivate positive social change. Rooted in issues affecting the nation's health, food and agricultural communities, Mr. Miller works to raise awareness on issues ranging from the crisis surrounding the health of farmworkers to America's emerging obesity epidemic. His skills as a strategic communicator have helped to address a broad list of critical legislative issues, including his media support of efforts to remove unhealthy foods and beverages from schools and his campaign to win support for menu labeling legislation. For his work to address nutrition and health issues, Mike has been awarded the nation's highest public relations honor, the Silver Anvil, on four different occasions.



Shakalpi Pendurkar, DDS, MPH

Director, Oral Public Health Program, San Mateo County

Since 2003 Dr. Pendurkar has been a dentist at Gardner Health Services, an FQHC in the heart of downtown San Jose. She is committed to improving access to care and the overall health of her patients, and has successfully advocated for the fluoridation of San Jose's drinking water. Dr. Pendurkar is part of the county's Coalition Against Sugar-Sweetened Beverages. She is President-Elect and member of the Board of Directors at the Santa Clara County Dental Society, and a delegate to both the California Dental Association and the American Dental Association. She is also serves as Chair of the Santa Clara County Collaborative for Oral Health. Dr. Pendurkar supervises residents as an Adjunct Clinical Faculty at NYU's Lutheran Medical Center Advanced Education in General Dentistry (AEGD) program, and has been appointed as a site visitor for AEGD programs by the Commission on Dental Accreditation. Furthermore, as Adjunct Clinical Faculty for AT Still University, she supervises fourth-year dental students during their externship program in San Jose. Prior to completing the Certificate in Dental Education at the University of Pacific and the Academy for Academic Leadership, Dr. Pendurkar earned an MPH (specializing in International Health Epidemiology) from Emory University, after which she worked at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in Atlanta. She is a member of Global Dental Ambassadors and has presented internationally on the importance of public health dentistry. She is also a graduate of the American Dental Association's Institute for Diversity in Leadership. Dr. Pendurkar strongly believes and advocates for a holistic integrated whole person trauma-informed model of providing care.



Alana Pfeffinger, MPH*

UCSF Division of General Internal Medicine/Zuckerberg San Francisco General Hospital

Alana is the Project Manager for the Champion Provider Fellowship. She has an MPH from the University of Southern California, Keck School of Medicine, and is a member of the Delta Omega Honorary Society in Public Health. Alana's area of focus has been obesity prevention and community engagement. She has worked in the Los Angeles area for the American Diabetes Association and the LA Junior Chamber of Commerce, where she managed the LA Watts Summer Games, interfacing with key stakeholders from multiple sectors. While pursuing her master's degree, Alana interned with the LA County Department of Public Health, Maternal Child and Adolescent Health Programs Division, on a project to improve healthy eating and physical activity in child care centers, with the ultimate goal to inform local and state policy for nutrition and physical activity standards in child care. She is interested in facilitating multi-sectorial partnerships to develop comprehensive, equitable solutions to address obesity and chronic disease.



Wagahta Semere, MD, MHS*

UCSF Division of General Internal Medicine/Zuckerberg San Francisco General Hospital

Dr. Semere is an Assistant Clinical Professor at UCSF and primary care physician at Zuckerberg San Francisco General Hospital. She has training in health services research through the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Clinical Scholars Program at Yale. Her research focuses on understanding the health and health care needs of vulnerable populations, with a particular interest in literacy and language barriers. Dr. Semere's program roles include developing content for in-person trainings, providing fellows with

technical assistance and support, and leading the Works in Progress series.



Melanie Thompson, DO

Champion Provider Fellow, Marin County

Dr. Thompson is a Family Medicine physician and serves as the Regional Medical Director, San Rafael for the Marin Community Clinics. She has a special interest in treating the entire family and has particular interest in wellness, meditation, diabetes prevention, and medical education. She believes it is important for patients to take an active role in their health and therefore approaches patients as partners, working with them to achieve small changes towards better health overall. An osteopathic doctor, she received her degree from Touro University College of Osteopathic Medicine and completed a residency in Family Medicine at the University of California (San Francisco), Fresno campus.

Professionally, she has also served as a behavior therapist and family support worker in the area of child abuse prevention.



Lauren Whetstone, PhD

California Department of Public Health, Nutrition Education and Obesity Prevention Branch

Dr. Lauren Whetstone has evaluated SNAP-Ed in California for over 7 years. She is Chief of the Research, Evaluation, and Strategic Alignment Section and Acting Branch Chief of the Nutrition Education and Obesity Prevention Branch at the California Department of Public Health. She is leading efforts to evaluate healthy eating, active living, and obesity prevention interventions

with a focus on policy, system, and environmental change strategies. Lauren is an author and editor of the SNAP-Ed Evaluation Framework and the accompanying interpretive guide. She has a PhD in applied cognitive psychology from the Claremont Graduate University. She held a faculty position at East Carolina University in Greenville, NC with 18 years' experience evaluating community and clinic-based obesity and chronic disease prevention interventions in underserved rural communities.

*Champion Provider Fellowship Project Team