

2024 Virtual Health Equity Forum

Sponsored by the Massachusetts Behavioral Health Partnership (MBHP)/Carelon

Trust Matters: Fostering Trust in Patient-Provider Relationships to Advance Health Equity

Friday, October 11, 2024

9 a.m. – 12 p.m.

9 a.m. – 9:20 a.m. **Welcome and Opening Remarks**

Dr. Simreet Khaira, *Child and Adolescent Associate Medical Director, MBHP*

Dr. Hossam Mahmoud, *Regional Chief Medical Officer, Carelon Behavioral Health*

Dr. Kiame Mahaniah, *Undersecretary of Health, MA Executive Office of Health and Human Services*

9:20 a.m. – 10:20 a.m. **Keynote Presentation: The Trust Cornerstone – Strengthening Patient-Provider Relationships to Promote Health Equity**

Dr. Kevin M. Simon, *Chief Behavioral Health Officer, City of Boston,*

will discuss how trust and the lack of trust between institutions, providers, and patients affects equitable and reasonable access to care for historically and otherwise marginalized communities. Dr. Simon will highlight both disparities and opportunities for solutions. This thought-provoking keynote will set the stage for this forum. A Q&A may be included in this session.

10:20 a.m. – 10:30 a.m. **Break**

10:30 a.m. – 11:50 a.m. **Panel Discussion: Trust Matters – Fostering Trust in Patient-Provider Relationships to Advance Health Equity**

Dr. Simreet Khaira, MD *Associate Medical Director, MBHP* will moderate a solution-focused discussion with esteemed panelists including:

Dr. Nicole Christian-Brathwaite, MD *Medical Director, Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, Monte Nido Walden*

Dallas M. Ducar, MSN, RN, PMHNP-BC, CNL, FAAN, *Founder and Entrepreneur*

Naheed Essar, *Executive Director, Asian Women for Health*

Dennis Heaphy, MPH, Med, MDiv, *Health Justice Advocate and Lead Researcher, Disability Policy Consortium*

Dr. Thea James, MD, MPH, MBA *Vice President of Mission, Associate Chief Medical Officer, and Co-Executive Director, Health Equity Accelerator, Boston Medical Center*

Meri Viano, *Associate Director, Parent Professional Advocacy League*

A panel discussion detailing the panelists' professional and personal experiences with macro and micro cultural and social health inequities in behavioral health care. The panel will observe inequities and look to opportunities and solutions to break down barriers and build trust-dependent relationships that can improve access to individualized care.

11:50 a.m. – 12 p.m. **Closing Remarks**

Sharon Hanson, *Vice President of Client Partnerships and Chief Executive Officer, MBHP*

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Trust Matters: Fostering Trust in Patient-Provider Relationships to Advance Health Equity

Keynote Speaker



Dr. Kevin M. Simon, MD, MPH, (He/Him) Dr. Simon is the City of Boston's inaugural Chief Behavioral Health Officer, appointed by Mayor Michelle Wu. In this groundbreaking role, Dr. Simon leads public health strategies to address Boston's evolving mental and behavioral health needs through the Boston Public Health Commission.

He is a distinguished physician-scientist, health policy expert, and noted writer. He serves as a pediatric addiction medicine psychiatrist at Boston Children's Hospital and an assistant professor of psychiatry at Harvard Medical School.

Dr. Simon's clinical work with the Adolescent Substance Use & Addiction Program (ASAP) within the Division of Addiction Medicine in the Department of Pediatrics and his appointment in the Department of Psychiatry & Behavioral Sciences at Boston Children's Hospital exemplifies his dedication to caring for youth and families, particularly those involved in systems of care such as the Massachusetts Department of Children and Families (DCF), Department of Youth Services (DYS), and Department of Mental Health (DMH).

A recent Commonwealth Fund Fellow in Minority Health Policy at Harvard University, Dr. Simon is also the Medical Director of a community behavioral health agency. His academic achievements include awards such as the AACAP Physician Scientist Program in Substance Use K12 Career Development Award, recognizing his research on understanding structural violence, mitigating health disparities, and improving mental health and substance use services.

Beyond academia, Dr. Simon consults with federal agencies on healthcare fraud, mental health system design, and best practices. His writings on health equity are in leading journals like the *American Journal of Public Health* and the *New England Journal of Medicine*. National audiences regularly seek his insights on mental health through respected media outlets, including NPR, NBC, and the Boston Globe.

Dr. Simon's contributions as a leader in systems change and equitable care for children and adolescents make him a vital voice in child and adolescent psychiatry.

Panel Discussion

Moderator



Dr. Simreet Khaira, MD, (She/Her) *Child and Adolescent Associate Medical Director, Massachusetts Behavioral Health Partnership*

Dr. Khaira is a board-certified Child, Adolescent, and Adult Psychiatrist working for MBHP as Associate Medical Director. Prior to this position, she served as the Associate Regional Medical Director in MA for Lifestance Health. After completing her residency and fellowship training at Tufts Medical Center, Simreet joined a small outpatient private practice, Commonwealth Psychology Associates. There she partnered with senior leaders to help grow the business, including the creation of policies and procedures rooted in best practices. She went on to lead the team, and when the company was eventually acquired by Lifestance Health, her role was expanded to support the larger region.

Panelists



Dr. Nicole Christian-Brathwaite, MD, (She/Her) *Medical Director, Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, Monte Nido Walden*

Dr. Christian-Brathwaite, Medical Director, Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, Monte Nido Walden, is a nationally recognized, Board-Certified Adult, Child, and Adolescent psychiatrist. She is a member of the inaugural class of the Women's Wellness through Equity and Leadership program, sponsored by the American Psychiatric Association and the American Physicians Foundation. She serves on the Board of Directors of The Post Partum Depression Fund of Massachusetts and The New England Council of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (NECCAP) and serves as Diversity Chair. Dr. Christian-Brathwaite specializes in perinatal and postpartum mental health, trauma-informed care, telepsychiatry, mental health in communities of color, school psychiatry, implicit bias, and racism in mental health. Dr. Christian-Brathwaite is a Medical Advisory Board Member for The Pro-Football Hall of Fame Health. In 2019 she received the American Medical Association's Women Physicians Section Inspiration Award. Dr. Christian-Brathwaite has presented Grand Rounds to Mayo Clinic, Boston Children's Hospital, Massachusetts General Hospital, and Kansas Children's Hospital and has been frequently featured in the Boston Globe, NPR, Washington Post, and numerous podcasts. A mother to two young boys, she operates her own private practice today via Headway's platform, through which she accepts insurance.



Dallas M. Ducar, MSN, RN, PMHNP-BC, CNL, FAAN, (She/Her) *Founder and Entrepreneur*

Dallas Ducar is an entrepreneur, advocate, and healthcare leader. Most recently, she was the founding CEO of Transhealth. She holds multiple degrees from the University of Virginia and a certificate in Public Leadership from the Harvard John F. Kennedy School of Government. As a faculty member at the University of Virginia School of Nursing, Columbia University, and the MGH Institute for Health Professions, Dallas brings a wealth of expertise to her role in shaping the future of healthcare. As a Fellow of the American Academy of Nursing, Dallas actively shapes health policy related to equity, ethics, and

affirming care. She demonstrates her unwavering commitment as the Co-Chair of the LGBTQ+ Health Care Alliance, a member of the LGBTQI Federal Policy Roundtable, and a fervent advocate for affirming care across the nation. Dallas extends her impact by serving on the Board of Directors for GLBTQ Legal Advocates and Defenders (GLAD), Healing Our Community Collaborative (HOCC), the University of Virginia Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, Access (IDEA) Fund, and the Health Advisory Council for Western Governors University. Embracing her role as a public servant, Dallas is a vital member of the Northampton Board of Health and has proudly served on the Official Transition Team for Attorney General Andrea Campbell. Dallas has helped advise local, regional, and national elected leaders in best practices and policies for gender-affirming healthcare, including advocating for protections for providers, and continues to push the needle of justice forward daily.



Naheed Esar (She/Her) *Executive Director, Asian Women for Health*

Naheed Esar is Executive Director of Asian Women for Health, a 501c3 dedicated to advancing health equity for Asian women and underserved people. She leads the organization's research, education, and advocacy programs and serves as an advisor, advocate, and leader for women's health, wellness, and equity for the Pan-Asian communities in Massachusetts.

A former Deputy Foreign Minister of Afghanistan, she worked for over 14 years with different international and national agencies in senior management capacities in the areas of policy, research, analysis and development, and women's social status in Afghanistan. Naheed has worked as Deputy for State Coordination Affairs, Director of Asset Registration and Verification, and Director of Policy and Analysis for the Administrative Office of the President (AOP). Before joining the government, she worked as United Nations Development Program (UNDP) policy consultant, Department for International Development (DFID) policy consultant, US Agency for International Development (USAID) researcher, and John Hopkins University research assistant where she conducted longitudinal research project on the lives of widows in Afghanistan. In addition to this, she has conducted independent research projects and founded an Afghan widow's association. She has written numerous articles and analytical papers for prominent research organizations and newspapers, including The Hill and Afghanistan Analyst Network (AAN).



Dennis Heaphy, DMin, MPH, MEd, MDiv (He/Him) *Health Justice Advocate and Lead Researcher, Disability Policy Consortium (DPC)*

Dennis is a Health Justice Advocate and Lead Researcher at the Disability Policy Consortium (DPC), a Massachusetts-based disability rights advocacy organization. He is a dually eligible Medicaid and Medicare beneficiary enrolled in One Care and a Dual Eligible Special Needs Plan (D-SNP). Dennis is engaged in research activities that advance equity, and person-centered care for persons enrolled in Medicaid or Medicare. He is chair of the One Care Implementation Council that guides the implementation of One Care.

In addition to his policy and research work in Massachusetts, Dennis serves on Board of Directors of Health Law Advocates (HLA), and Health Care for All (HCFA). He also serves on the Medicaid and Children's Health Insurance Program Payment Advisory Committee (MACPAC). Previously, Dennis worked at the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (MDPH) and remains active on MDPH working groups that advance health equity.



Dr. Thea James MD, MPH, MBA, (She/Her) *Vice President of Mission, Associate Chief Medical Officer, and Co-Executive Director, Health Equity Accelerator at Boston Medical Center*

Dr. James is Professor of Emergency Medicine and Director of the Violence Intervention Advocacy Program at BMC. Dr. James is a founding member of the Health Alliance for Violence Intervention (the HAVI). In 2011 she was appointed to Attorney General Eric Holder's National Task Force on Children Exposed to Violence.

As Vice President of Mission, Dr. James partners with caregivers throughout BMC and coordinates BMC's relationships and strategic alliances with a wide range of local, state, and national organizations and partners, to meet the full spectrum of essentials that enables patients and communities to thrive. The intentionality is to foster a strategic ecosystem of growth, transformation, and effective models of care that are rooted in equity, economic inclusion, economic mobility, and other models of care that are essential for patients and communities to thrive.

Dr. James served on the Massachusetts Board of Registration in Medicine 2009-2012, where she served as chair of the Licensing Committee. She is a 2008 awardee of the Boston Public Health Commission's Mulligan Award for public service and a 2012 recipient of the Suffolk County District Attorney's Role Model Award. She received The Boston Business Journal Healthcare Hero award in 2012 and 2015. She was a 2014 recipient of the Schwartz Center Compassionate Care Award. The Boston Chamber of commerce awarded Dr. James with the Pinnacle Award in 2015, which honors women in business and the professions. In 2020, Dr. James received the American College of Emergency Medicine Lifetime Achievement Award. Also in 2020, The History Project presented her with a History Maker Award. Dr. James recently received the inaugural 2020 Thea James Social Emergency Medicine Award from the American College of Emergency Physicians.

Dr. James' passion is in Public Health both domestically and globally. She was a Supervising Medical Officer on the Boston Disaster Medical Assistance Team (MA-1 DMAT), under the Department of Health and Human Services. She has deployed to post-9/11 in NYC, Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans in 2005, Bam, Iran after the 2003 earthquake, and Port-Au-Prince Haiti after the earthquake of 2010. Dr. James traveled to Haiti with MA-1 DMAT one day after the 2010 earthquake. A graduate of Georgetown University School of Medicine, James trained in Emergency Medicine at Boston City Hospital, where she was a chief resident.



Meri Viano (She/Her) *Associate Director, Parent/Professional Advocacy League*

Meri Viano is the Associate Director of the Parent/Professional Advocacy League (PPAL), a statewide, family-run, grassroots nonprofit organization statewide in Massachusetts. Meri has worked with PPAL for 21 years. One of the key areas that Meri has created and been instrumental in PPAL is working on families and children being understood in the journey of raising children with significant needs. Meri has trained and supervised family support specialists across the Commonwealth. She has created and implemented family positions in courts and hospitals, as well as for community, residential, and advocacy organizations.

Meri has been credited for working with an equity lens and having a strong passion for people with lived experience. Meri has worked in the juvenile justice field for over a decade. After having kids, Meri began working to support families through leadership, training, and advocacy. She became involved in children's mental health as an advocate for her sons. Her sons have emotional,

behavioral, trauma, and mental health needs, and her daughter has significant medical needs. Meri is currently raising a 4year-old grandson today.

Meri's areas of expertise include mental health policy and racial equity, by working with educators, researchers, and police departments on having supportive conversations with families and youth about the child-serving system. Meri credits her work on the philosophy of family and youth-driven voice and advocacy.

Meri is a member of the MBHP Health Equity Committee and MBHP Family Advisory Council.