

2020 NIH Rural Health Seminar: Rural Health Challenges in the Era of COVID-19

Speaker Biographies

Randall Akee, PhD, University of California, Los Angeles



Dr. Randall Akee is an associate professor in the Department of Public Policy and American Indian Studies at UCLA. Previously, he served as a David M. Rubenstein Fellow in Economic Studies at the Brookings Institution. Dr. Akee completed his doctorate at Harvard University in June 2006. Dr. Akee is an applied microeconomist and has worked in the areas of Labor Economics, Economic Development and Migration. Previously, he served on the National Advisory Council on Race, Ethnic, and Other Populations at the U.S. Census Bureau. Dr. Akee also spent several years working for the State of Hawaii Office of Hawaiian Affairs Economic Development Division. He is a research fellow at the Harvard

Project on American Indian Economic Development and a Research Associate at the National Bureau of Economic Research.

Alice Ammerman, DrPH, University of North Carolina



Dr. Alice Ammerman is the Mildred Kaufman Distinguished Professor in the Department of Nutrition, Gillings School of Global Public Health at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, North Carolina. Her research involves design, testing, implementation and dissemination of innovative clinical and community-based nutrition and physical activity interventions for chronic disease risk reduction in low income and minority populations. She is Director of the UNC Center for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention (HPDP), part of a national network of 26 CDC prevention research centers

(PRCs) that work with community partners to develop and evaluate prevention-focused public health interventions for wide dissemination, particularly in underserved communities. Dr. Ammerman and colleagues have developed and are testing the “Med-South” diet, which is the Mediterranean diet adapted to agricultural availability and taste preferences in the Southeastern United States. Her research addresses the role of sustainable food systems in health, the environment, and economic well-being, emphasizing the social determinants of

health, particularly food access and food insecurity. She has a developing interest in Culinary Medicine to improve medical training programs and uses social entrepreneurship as a sustainable approach to addressing public health concerns.

Lydia Bazzano, MD, PhD, Tulane University



Dr. Lydia Bazzano is Lynda B. and H. Leighton Steward Professor in Nutrition Research and Director of Tulane Center for Lifespan Epidemiology Research at Tulane University. As a clinician-investigator trained in epidemiology and internal medicine, Dr. Bazzano has expertise in a broad range of clinical research with a focus on cardiovascular disease and its risk factors, with an emphasis on the role of cardio-metabolic factors, including diet, obesity, lipids and glucose, in the development of vascular disease and its consequences over the life course. She has served as PI of a highly successful NIH-funded randomized controlled of a behavioral intervention to improve weight and cardio-metabolic risk factors through dietary change (subproject of P20RR017659).

Marshall Bloom, MD, National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases



Dr. Marshall Bloom is Associate Director for Science Management, at NIAID Rocky Mountain Laboratories (RML), and Chief of the Biology of Vector-Borne Viruses Section in Hamilton Montana Labs (RML), NIAID. Dr. Bloom received his MD in 1971 from Washington University School of Medicine in St. Louis, MO., and then joined the Rocky Mountain Laboratories (RML) of NIAID in 1972 as a research associate. From 1975 to 1977, he was a postdoctoral fellow in the NIAID Laboratory of the Biology of Viruses on the NIH campus in Bethesda, Maryland. He returned to RML as a tenured investigator in 1977 and was a charter member of the Laboratory of Persistent Viral Diseases. He is a world expert in the molecular biology and pathogenesis of parvoviruses

and is considered an authority in biocontainment. In 2004, Dr. Bloom's research group changed its focus to the pathogenesis of tickborne Division of Intramural Research, and among his duties have been program supervision of the permitting, construction, and staffing of NIAID's first biosafety level-4 facility. In 2008, Dr. Bloom was named associate director for science management for RML in NIAID's Division of Intramural Research. He has also served as acting chief of the NIAID new Laboratory of Virology and acting chief of the NIAID Laboratory of Human Bacterial Pathogenesis.

Billy A. Charles, University of Alaska, Fairbanks



Billy A. Charles is a Yup'ik Alaska Native shareholder and tribal member from the Native Village of Emmonak, Alaska. He is a traditional Yup'ik song and dance leader in his community and is an active fisherman and subsistence hunter. As a Research Co-Investigator in UAF's Center of Alaska Native Health Research, Mr. Charles provides leadership, cultural direction and intervention implementation and fidelity management for several NIH grants and a new NSF grant focusing on environment, rural economies and wellbeing in relation to fossil fuels in Alaska. He is a Co-Investigator on a NIAAA R01 prevention trial study that seeks to test the efficacy of a Yup'ik Alaska Native model and theory-driven intervention implementation and dissemination

process. He is also co-investigator for the Alaska Native Collaborative Hub for Research on Resilience (ANCHRR). Mr. Charles is an experienced tribal leader in his community and is actively engaged in every aspect of the health disparities research efforts taking place in his and other Yup'ik and rural Alaska Native communities.

Thomas Chávez, PhD, University of New Mexico



Dr. Thomas Chávez is an Assistant Professor in counselor education at the University of New Mexico. He has provided direct services in school and community settings. Dr. Chávez has focused his scholarly works on Latino health and wellness including work with youth and families of both immigrant and non-immigrant status. In 2018, he received a pilot award from the Transdisciplinary Research, Equity, and Engagement Center (NIMHD Grant #U54 MD004811-09) to investigate the barriers and facilitators for understanding the impact of anti-immigrant policy on mental health and well-being for DREAMERS ages 18-35 who identify as undocumented and have family members who are mixed citizenship status. Dr. Chávez is drawing from the pilot study to investigate the

impact of COVID-19 on substance use, family stress, and utilization of cultural traditional practices for health and healing among Mexican and Mexican American communities. He teaches courses in child and adolescent counseling, school counseling, and multiculturalism. He is a practitioner of traditional medicine and has taught a summer course on Mexican healing (Curanderismo) to international cohorts for nine years, which incorporates mind, body, social, and spiritual practices.

Giselle Corbie-Smith, MD, MSc, University of North Carolina



Dr. Giselle Corbie-Smith is Kenan Distinguished Professor, Departments of Social Medicine and Medicine, Director of the UNC Center for Health Equity Research at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and Associate Provost for UNC Rural. Internationally recognized for her scholarly work and expertise in community-engaged and patient-oriented research, Dr. Corbie-Smith has served as the Principal Investigator of several community-based participatory research projects focused on disease risk reduction among rural racial and ethnic minorities. These projects have included funding through the

National Heart Lung and Blood Institute, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, the National Center for Minority Health and Health Disparities, the National Institute of Nursing Research, Greenwall Foundation, and the National Human Genome Research Institute. Dr. Corbie-Smith is accomplished in drawing communities, faculty, and health care providers into working partnerships in clinical and translational research. This engagement ultimately transforms the way that academic investigators and community members interact while boosting public trust in research. She has also shown a deep commitment to working in North Carolina by bringing research to communities, involving community members as partners in research, and improving health of minority populations and underserved areas. In 2013, she established the UNC Center for Health Equity Research (CHER) to bring together collaborative multidisciplinary teams of scholars, trainees, and community members to improve North Carolina communities' health through shared commitment to innovation, collaboration, and health equity. Dr. Corbie-Smith is also the Co-PI for RWJF's Advancing Change Leadership Clinical Scholars Program, which provides intensive learning, collaboration, networking, and leadership development to seasoned clinicians to create a community of practitioners promoting health equity across the country. She recently served as the President of the Society of General Internal Medicine (SGIM). In 2018, she was elected to the National Academy of Medicine. In 2019, Dr. Corbie-Smith started and is the host of *A Different Kind of Leader*, a podcast that captures insights from diverse leaders so that organizations are in a stronger position to grow, innovate, and meet the challenges of our day. She earned her MD from the Albert Einstein College of Medicine and MSc in clinical research from Emory University.

Brenda Eskenazi, PhD, MA, University of California, Berkeley



Dr. Brenda Eskenazi is the Brian and Jennifer Maxwell Endowed Chair in Public Health and Director of the Center for Environmental Research and Children's Health. Brenda Eskenazi is also the professor of public health at the UC Berkeley School of Public Health. She works locally and globally on the effects of environmental exposures on the health of children. She is interested in environmental exposures ranging from chemical exposure, such as pesticides and dioxins, to air pollution to climate change, and studies how these environmental exposures may interact with social adversities to affect the development of children. Her work tends to focus on populations who are of lower income and who may be at higher risk of adverse effects. Many of her research questions are answered by the conduct of birth cohort studies and she has

engaged in or advised birth cohorts around the world. Dr. Eskenazi earned her PhD in Neuropsychology, Graduate School and University Center, City University of New York, 1979, MA in Psychology, Queens College, City University of New York, 1974, and BA in Psychology, Queens College, City University of New York, 1971.

Angela S. Lambert, Our Lady of Angels Hospital



Angela S. Lambert is the Director of Marketing and Communications at Our Lady of the Angels Hospital in Bogalusa, Louisiana. With more than 20 years of mass communications and community relations experience, Angela oversees the internal and external communications and community outreach efforts of Our Lady of the Angels Hospital and Our Lady of the Angels Physician Group. Angela received her Bachelor of Arts in Mass Communications/Public Relations from Loyola University New Orleans. She currently serves as Co-Chair of Bogalusa Strong and FOCUS Franklinton, helping to oversee the healthy community coalition work across Washington Parish. She is a Past President of the Bogalusa Rotary Club and serves on the Washington Parish Leadership

Council for the United Way of Southeast Louisiana.

Tom Morris, MPA, Health Resources and Services Administration



Mr. Tom Morris serves as the Associate Administrator for Rural Health Policy in the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). In that role, Tom oversees the work of the Federal Office of Rural Health Policy, which is charged with advising the HHS Secretary on rural health issues. The Office, which has an annual budget of \$317 million, administers a range of research and capacity building grant programs that serve rural communities. In 2012, Tom was the recipient of the HHS Distinguished Service Award and in 2015 he was awarded a Presidential Rank Award for Meritorious Service. Over the course of his Federal career, Tom has testified on rural health issues

before the House and Senate. He has past work experience in the U.S. Senate as well as various policy and program positions within HRSA and HHS. A 1996 Presidential Management Intern, Tom came to government after a career as a newspaper reporter and editor. He has an undergraduate degree in journalism from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and a master's in public administration with a concentration in community health from East Carolina University. He also earned a Certificate in Public Leadership from the Brookings Institution in 2008.

Priscah Mujuru, DrPH, MPH, RN, National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities



Dr. Priscah Mujuru is a Program Director at NIMHD, where she manages a diverse research portfolio that includes clinical trials and community-based participatory research involving populations across the lifespan. Her interests include health disparities in women and child health; cognitive function and mobility in older adults; adherence to treatments and medication; and occupational and environmental health concerns and rural health. In 2019, she published a [blog](#) on rural health. Dr. Mujuru is also interested in capacity building and training projects. Prior to joining the NIMHD, Dr. Mujuru was a Scientific Review Officer/Administrator (SRO) at the Center for Scientific Review and subsequently at the Eunice Kennedy Shriver National

Institute of Child Health and Human Development from 2010 to 2017, where she managed large and varied scientific review panels. Before joining the NIH, Dr. Mujuru spent several years (1993-2010) at West Virginia University where she conducted clinical and community-based research addressing health disparities in asthma, obesity, and occupational and environmental exposures in rural populations. She also led projects in a biomedical pipeline

program that introduced high school students from underserved and disadvantaged communities to health sciences careers. Internationally, Dr. Mujuru has guided projects that evaluated public health programs for health professionals and medical students in Africa. Dr. Mujuru collaborated on many projects with the Association of Occupational and Environmental Clinics to develop physical assessment tools for occupational health nurses. Dr. Mujuru received a DrPH in epidemiology from the University of Pittsburgh, an MPH in environmental health from Boston University, a BSc in occupational hygiene from South Bank University, London, England, UK, and a BSN from West Virginia University.

Carla Norwood, PhD, Working Landscapes



Carla Norwood is a co-founder and Executive Director of Working Landscapes. She has deep roots in Warren County, where Working Landscapes is based, having grown up with an extended family on a former tobacco farm. Carla received her BA and Master of Environmental Management from Duke University, along with a Certificate in Nonprofit Management. She earned a PhD in ecology from UNC Chapel Hill in 2009. Carla works hard to create triple-bottom line benefit in her home region, with the help of a grounded perspective and sense of humor. Outside of work, she enjoys the challenge of parenting Juniper and twins Sam and Silas (along with Gabriel), and is beginning to implement a 50-year plan for the

revitalization of her family farm.

Eliseo J. Pérez-Stable, MD, National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities



Dr. Eliseo J. Pérez-Stable is the Director of the NIMHD at the National Institutes of Health. His expertise spans a broad range of health disparities disciplines. His research interests began in Latino health, especially focused on tobacco use. Dr. Pérez-Stable's work aims to improve the health of racial and ethnic minorities and underserved populations through direct patient care, education, and discovery. Advancing patient-centered care will require a stronger foundation in primary care, improved cross-cultural communication skills among clinicians, and greater diversity in the biomedical research workforce. He spent more than 30 years leading research on smoking cessation and tobacco-control in Latino populations in the United States and Latin America. His collaborations with researchers and public health advocates in Argentina helped put tobacco use on the country's public health agenda, raising awareness of tobacco

use as a critical public health problem, building capacity for tobacco control policy, and creating opportunities for prevention and treatment measures through physician education and smoking cessation programs. In addition, as a co-principal investigator of the NCI-funded Redes En Acción National Latino Cancer Control Research and Education Network, he spearheaded the development of a research agenda on cancer control for Latinos in the United States. Dr. Pérez-Stable has also led research on aging among minorities as Director of the Center for Aging in Diverse Communities, funded by NIH's National Institute on Aging. Prior to becoming NIMHD Director, he built a career at the University of California, San Francisco (UCSF), where he was a professor of medicine, Chief of the Division of General Internal Medicine, and Director of the UCSF Medical Effectiveness Research Center for Diverse Populations.

Stacy Rasmus, PhD, University of Alaska, Fairbanks



Dr. Stacy Rasmus is research associate professor at IAB and the College of Rural and Community Development and Center for Alaska Native Health and Research at the Institute of Arctic Biology (CANHR) director. Dr. Rasmus' research focuses on understanding the intersections between culture, health, and well-being, and the role of resilience and protective factors in reducing health disparities among American Indian/Alaska Native peoples. Her expertise is in social and behavioral sciences and she has a broad background in medical anthropology and psychology with specific expertise in the translation of cultural knowledge and practice into health interventions. She utilizes tribal participatory and collaborative approaches to engage AI/AN communities in quantitative, quasi-

experimental, and mixed-method research designs while remaining responsive and respectful to cultural and social norms and practices. Dr. Rasmus received her PhD in anthropology from the University of Alaska Fairbanks in 2008. She is trained in social and behavioral sciences, with specific expertise in the translation of Indigenous knowledge and practice into community-driven, culturally centered health interventions. She leads several federal grants that focus on increasing strength and resilience and reducing risk for substance-use disorders and suicide in American Indian and Alaska Native communities.

Griffin P. Rodgers, MD, MACP, National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases



Dr. Griffin P. Rodgers was named Director of the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases (NIDDK)—one of the National Institutes of Health (NIH)—on April 1, 2007. He had previously served as NIDDK’s Acting Director since March 2006 and had been the Institute’s Deputy Director since January 2001. As the Director of NIDDK, Dr. Rodgers provides scientific leadership and manages a staff of over 600 employees and a budget of about \$2.3 billion. Dr. Rodgers received his undergraduate, graduate, and medical degrees from Brown University in Providence, Rhode Island. He performed his residency in internal medicine at Barnes Hospital and chief residency at the John Cochran VA at Washington University in St. Louis. His fellowship training in hematology was in a joint program

of the NIH with George Washington University. In addition to his medical and research training, he earned an MBA, with a focus on the business of medicine/science, from Johns Hopkins University in 2005, and a master’s degree in legal studies in 2017. As a research investigator, Dr. Rodgers is widely recognized for his contributions to the development of the first effective—and FDA-approved—therapy for sickle cell anemia. In addition, he and his collaborators have reported on a modified blood stem-cell transplant regimen that is highly effective in reversing sickle cell disease in adults and is associated with relatively low toxicity. He has been honored for his research with numerous awards including the 1998 Richard and Hind Rosenthal Foundation Award, the 2000 Arthur S. Flemming Award, the Legacy of Leadership Award in 2002, a Mastership from the American College of Physicians in 2005, the Herbert C. Nickens Award in 2018, and a Fellowship in the Royal College of Physicians (London) in 2018, among others. Dr. Rodgers is a member of the American Society of Hematology, the American Society of Clinical Investigation, the Association of American Physicians, the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, the American Association for the Advancement of Science, and the National Academy of Medicine, among others.

Joni Rutter, PhD, National Center for Advancing Translational Sciences



Dr. Joni L. Rutter is the deputy director of NCATS, where she is responsible for planning, executing, and assessing the Center's complex and multifaceted preclinical and clinical research programs and serves as a key national spokesperson for translational science. She guides the NCATS Advisory Council and the Cures Acceleration Network Review Board activities and serves as the Center's scientific liaison to the *All of Us* Research Program, part of the Precision Medicine Initiative® at NIH, helping to establish more robust interactions with NCATS programs. Prior to joining NCATS, Dr. Rutter served as the director of scientific programs within the *All of Us* Research

Program, where she led the scientific programmatic development and implementation efforts to build a national research cohort of 1 million or more U.S. participants to advance precision medicine. While at NIH, she also led the Division of Neuroscience and Behavior at the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA). In this role, she developed and coordinated research on basic and clinical neuroscience, brain and behavioral development, genetics, epigenetics, computational neuroscience, bioinformatics, and drug discovery. Dr. Rutter also coordinated the NIDA Genetics Consortium and biospecimen repository. Rutter received her PhD from the Department of Pharmacology and Toxicology, Dartmouth Medical School, Hanover, New Hampshire, and completed a fellowship at NCI within the Division of Cancer Epidemiology and Genetics.

Monica Webb Hooper, PhD, National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities



Dr. Monica Webb Hooper is Deputy Director of the National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities (NIMHD). She works closely with the Director, Dr. Pérez-Stable, and the leadership, to oversee all aspects of the institute and to support the implementation of the science visioning recommendations to improve minority health, reduce health disparities, and promote health equity. Dr. Webb Hooper is an internationally recognized translational behavioral scientist and clinical health psychologist. She has dedicated her career to the scientific study of minority health and racial/ethnic disparities, focusing on chronic illness prevention and health behavior change. Her program of community engaged research focuses on understanding

multilevel factors and biopsychosocial mechanisms underlying modifiable risk factors, such as tobacco use and stress processes, and the development of community responsive and culturally specific interventions. Her goal is to contribute to the body of scientific knowledge and disseminate findings into communities with high need. Before joining NIMHD, Dr. Webb

Hooper was a Professor of Oncology, Family Medicine & Community Health and Psychological Sciences at Case Western Reserve University. She was also Associate Director for Cancer Disparities Research and Director of the Office of Cancer Disparities Research in the Case Comprehensive Cancer Center. During her time as a professor, Dr. Webb Hooper was principal investigator of federal and foundation grants, totaling over \$15 million. To date, she has published over 90 peer-reviewed articles and book chapters. Dr. Webb Hooper completed her doctorate in clinical psychology from the University of South Florida, internship in medical psychology from the University of Florida Health Sciences Center, and her Bachelor of Science from the University of Miami.

Vincent Werito (Diné), PhD, University of Mexico



Dr. Vincent Werito (Diné) is an Associate Professor in the College of Education and Health Sciences at the University of New Mexico in the Department of Language, Literacy, and Socio-cultural Studies. His research interests are in the following areas: teacher education, Indigenous pedagogy, Diné (Navajo) Education, Navajo Language cultural revitalization, Indigenous Nation building and cultural/ecological sustainability. His past research focused on the experiences of Indigenous youth in education and identifying exemplary practices in the education of Indigenous youth. His latest research projects examine community-engaged research partnerships, community-defined understandings of wellbeing, and successful aging with a health research focus. In his presentation Dr. Vincent Werito will share insights about ways that Indigenous (Diné) communities can be actively engaged in research to address health disparities by

drawing on their community cultural wealth. Using a mixed methods approach, the study utilized community engagement surveys and focus groups to build a community research partnership and define community wellbeing. The findings of this study demonstrate that a research model integrating CBPR with a Diné-centered research paradigm can improve health and educational outcomes in Indigenous contexts through community partnerships focused on critical dialogue and praxis to enable culturally relevant, culture- and land-based interventions driven by the local community.

Cathleen E. Willging, PhD, University of New Mexico



Dr. Cathleen E. Willging is a medical anthropologist and Senior Research Scientist at the Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation with experience in mixed-method research, intervention development and evaluation, and implementation science. Her research focuses on public mental health and substance use treatment in the United States, healthcare reform, evidence-based practice implementation and sustainment in complex systems, and the advancement of culturally- and contextually-relevant programs to support marginalized groups affected by inequities. Dr. Willging current work entails the application of implementation science theory

and methods to support innovative programming to reduce health and healthcare disparities for sexual and gender minority (SGM) populations in diverse service delivery settings, i.e., primary care practices, hospital emergency departments, and educational institutions. This work includes a statewide project centered on implementing a multi-level structural approach to decrease risks that contribute to adverse mental health outcomes (e.g., suicide) among SGM high school students in New Mexico.

Mysha Wynn, MA, Project Momentum, Inc.



Mysha Wynn is the Founder and Executive Director of Project Momentum, Inc. (PMI), a community-based organization in rural eastern North Carolina that provides substance abuse counseling and related services. Ms. Wynn earned her undergraduate degree in Psychology from North Carolina Central University and her graduate degree in Education from East Carolina University. Throughout her career, Mysha has worked tirelessly to arrest health disparities that plague rural African American communities. For 15 years, she has partnered with academic institutions to engage in community-based participatory research projects and led numerous community engagement initiatives. These partnerships have catapulted PMI into new spaces and enabled Mysha and her staff to play key roles in several NIH grants seeking to advance health equity

research, and intervention development and implementation. Presently, Mysha is a Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Interdisciplinary Fellow, enabling her to further expand the services of PMI. Mysha serves on several community advisory committees/boards and is the principal investigator of a three-year substance abuse and misuse initiative funded by Kate B. Reynolds Charitable trust. Additionally, Mysha is a founding partner of the PRIME Collective, LLC, a community consulting group providing strategic insight and direction to researchers seeking to incorporate community engagement principles into their programs of research. Moreover, the

PRIME Collective, LLC supports investigators in addressing barriers that stifle community participation in academic research.

Xinzhi Zhang, MD, PhD, National Center for Advancing Translational Sciences



Dr. Xinzhi Zhang is a Program Director in the NCATS Division of Clinical Innovation, where he manages a portfolio of Clinical and Translational Science Awards (CTSA), including the CTSA National Center for Data to Health. He is also a lieutenant commander in the U.S. Public Health Service Commissioned Corps, an elite group of public health leaders who respond to national health crises. Dr. Zhang joined NIH in 2012 as a program director in the National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities' Division of Extramural Scientific Health Programs, where he provided leadership for scientific program development and project management on minority health and health disparities

research. Prior to that, Dr. Zhang had joined the National Center for Infectious Diseases' Office of Surveillance at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in 2003 as a Steven M. Teutsch Prevention Effectiveness Fellow. From 2005 to 2012, he was an epidemiologist in CDC's National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion's Division of Diabetes Translation. Dr. Zhang has authored papers for inclusion in CDC's Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report, as well as book chapters, and he has had more than 60 articles published in peer-reviewed journals, including the Journal of the American Medical Association, the American Journal of Public Health, and the American Journal of Preventive Medicine. Currently, he also serves as an associate editor of Health Equity. Dr. Zhang received his MD from Peking Union Medical College in 1998 and his PhD in health services administration from the University of Alabama at Birmingham in 2003.