Speaker Bios

COL (ret.) Paul Pasquina, MD

Dr. Pasquina is the Professor and Inaugural Chair of the Department of Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation (PM&R) at the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences (USUHS) and the Chief of the Department of Rehabilitation at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center (WRNMMC). His board certifications include PM&R, Electrodiagnostic Medicine, and Pain Medicine. He is a graduate of the United States Military Academy at West Point and USUHS. He completed a fellowship in primary care sports medicine from USUHS and Georgetown University. His current research efforts are focused on exploring new technologies to enhance the recovery, rehabilitation, and reintegration of combat casualties, particularly those with extremity trauma and traumatic brain injury. These efforts are primarily concentrated through his positions as the Director of the Center for Rehabilitation Sciences Research (www.CRSR.org) and Co-Principle Investigator within the Center for Neuroscience and Regenerative Medicine (www.usuhs.mil/cnrm/)

Richard W. Thomas, MD, DDS

Dr. Richard W. Thomas is the sixth President of the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences. As president, Dr. Thomas is responsible for the academic, research and service mission of the university. His responsibilities also include oversight of the University's graduate health professions education and healthcare research, to include emerging technologies and treatments, in support of the Military Health System and Department of Defense. Dr. Thomas earned an undergraduate degree in biological science from West Virginia University (WVU), a Doctorate in Dental Surgery from the WVU School of Dentistry and a Medical Degree from the WVU School of Medicine. He also holds a master's degree in Strategic Studies from the U.S. Army War College. Dr. Thomas is board certified in Otolaryngology/Head & Neck Surgery and is a fellow of the American College of Surgery, and a fellow of the American College of Dentists. Dr. Thomas retired as a Major General from the United States Army with over 26 years of service.

Senator Chris Van Hollen

Is a member of the U.S. Senate from Maryland. Senator Van Hollen was first elected to the Senate in 2016. Senator Van Hollen is a former member of the United States House of Representatives, representing Maryland's 8th Congressional District from 2002 to 2017. Prior to his congressional career, he served as a member of both the Maryland House of Delegates and the Maryland State Senate. He earned his B.A. from Swarthmore College, his M.P.P. from the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University and his J.D. from Georgetown Law School in 1982, 1985, and 1990, respectively. Prior to his political career, he worked as an attorney.

William K. Smith MD, FAAPMR
Dr. William Kennedy Smith is board certified in PM&R and holds a certificate in lower extremity prosthetics from Northwestern University. He is Assistant Professor at the Uniformed Services University of Health Sciences and Co-Chair and principal organizer of the State of the Science Symposia: *Metabolic Pathways and Therapeutics to Promote Resilience, Rehabilitation and Delayed Aging*. He is an Adjunct Assistant Professor at the University of South Carolina College of Pharmacy with a focus on the development of therapeutics that target the aging process. Dr. Smith has an extensive track record of accomplishment in the areas of disability, resilience and rehabilitation. He founded Physicians Against Land Mines, a co-recipient of the 1997 Nobel peace prize. He organized the first meeting, and was a founding steering committee member, of the International Disability Caucus, which represented civil society groups in negotiations for the United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities.

Dr. Charlotte Yeh, MD
Chief Medical Officer for AARP Services, Inc.
In her role, Dr. Yeh works with the independent carriers that make health-related products and services available to AARP members, to identify programs and initiatives that will lead to enhanced care for older adults. Dr. Yeh has more than 30 years of healthcare experience – as a practitioner and Chief of Emergency Medicine at Newton-Wellesley Hospital and Tufts Medical Center, as the Medical Director for the National Heritage Insurance Company, a Medicare Part B claims contractor, and as the Regional Administrator for the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services in Boston. Dr. Yeh received a BA from Northwestern University and her medical degree from Northwestern University Medical School. She completed her internship in General Surgery at the University of Washington and her residency in Emergency Medicine at UCLA.

Ronald A. Kohanski, Ph.D.
Director Designate of the Division of Aging Biology, National Institute on Aging

Ronald Kohanski has research interests in numerous areas of biology of aging, enzymology and developmental biology. His research in regenerative biology and medicine takes effect through the use of heterochronic parabiosis and heterochronic blood exchange, which were found to assist older animals in responding to “youthful signals” in the brain. This is just one effort in his quest to understand functional decline and heterogeneity of aging among human populations. His work with the NIA’s Longevity Assurance Genes and DAB program work to use aging rates as a principle in investigative research, including understanding influences of genetics, environments, diets, and pharmaceuticals in all studies. Prior to joining the NIA and focusing his research attention on aging, Dr. Kohanski worked on the developmental biology of insulin and its relation to enzymes.

https://www.nia.nih.gov/about/staff/kohanski-ronald

Ana Maria Cuervo, M.D., Ph.D.
Professor, Department of Developmental & Molecular Biology, Department of Anatomy & Structural Biology, Department of Medicine – Hepatology
Robert and Renee Belfer Chair for the Study of Neurodegenerative Diseases
Albert Einstein College of Medicine

Ana Maria Cuervo has an extensive background in molecular and structural biology. After starting her lab at the Albert Einstein College of Medicine, she has studied the role of protein-degradation in age and related diseases or disorders, specifically affecting neurodegeneration the metabolic pathway. Her studies have found a link between altering the autophagy of lysosomal proteins and the appearance of neurodegenerative diseases, such as Parkinson's, Alzheimer's, and Huntington's diseases. She has also shown that restoration of normal lysosomal function can prevent a buildup of damaged proteins and minimize the presence or effects of these age-related diseases. In addition, autophagy has been shown to relate to the glucose and lipid metabolism, and aging can slow down autophagic pathways, resulting in metabolic disorders such as diabetes and obesity in older individuals.

https://einsteinmed.org/faculty/8784/ana-maria-cuervo/

Tom Kalil
Chief Innovation Officer, Schmidt Futures

Tom Kalil, currently serving as the CIO for Schmidt Futures, previously served two presidents of the United States in assisting them to launch scientific and technological initiatives in areas such as nanotechnology, neuroscience, data science and robotics, and more. Under the Obama Administration, he worked to develop the BRAIN initiative, and intensive research project working to understand brain function using innovative technologies and nanotechnology. These methods have been used by researchers in investigating new ways to diagnose, treat, cure, and even potentially prevent brain disorders by expanding the knowledge on brain processing, storage, transmission and utilization of information. The impact of this initiative has been critical in the development of brain mapping and in the further investigation of neurological disorders, specifically affecting an aging population.

https://schmidtfutures.com/person/tom-kalil/

Michael Stebbins, Ph.D.
President, Science Advisors LLC

Michael Stebbins currently serves as a geneticist and formerly served as a public policy advisor and Assistant Director for the Biotechnology in the White House Office of Science and Technology under the Obama Administration. He founded a science and health consulting firm in 2018, focused on providing guidance to companies and organizations on the topic of science, technology, and public policy. He developed eight Executive Orders involving antibiotic resistance issues and pollinator health restoration in US during his time at the White House. His work involved increasing access to federally funded scientific research publications, improving scientific reproducibility and preferential purchasing of antibiotic free meats, among many other things.

https://www.iq.harvard.edu/people/michael-stebbins

Luigi Ferruci, M.D., Ph.D.
Scientific Director, National Institute on Aging
Senior Investigator, Longitudinal Studies Section, NIH

As a geriatrician and epidemiologist, Luigi Ferrucci has worked in longitudinal studies of aging for many years. He has played important roles in the advancements of epidemiology and demography as they relate to aging across the US and Europe, including studies such as the European Longitudinal Study on Aging, the “ICare Dicomano Study, and others. His research involves investigating the casual pathways leading to physical and cognitive decline in older individuals. He’s continued his efforts to understanding the process of aging in both the United States, where he serves as Scientific Director for the NIA, and in Italy, where he conducts many studies on the older generations living in Tuscany and Florence.

https://www.nia.nih.gov/about/staff/ferrucci-luigi

Patricia Jones, DrPH, MPH, MS

Dr. Jones leads the NIA's efforts in stimulating health disparities research related to aging. Dr. Jones is the Director of the Office of Special Populations. In this position, she advances the science of eliminating health disparities, facilitates addressing health disparities through basic, clinical and translational and behavioral and social science research, supports developing initiatives that strengthens NIA’s research and training opportunities available to underrepresented persons, including minorities and women, and advises other senior staff on health research related to underrepresented populations; and directs the NIA Butler-Williams Scholars Program for early career aging researchers.

Rory Cooper Ph.D.
FISA/PVA Distinguished Professor, Past Chair, Department of Rehabilitation Science and Technology, Professor of Bioengineering, Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation, and Orthopedic Surgery, University of Pittsburgh

Rory Cooper has a focus in Veterans Affairs and rehabilitation. As a veteran himself, he is responsible for the creation of the Human Engineering Research Laboratories and the VA Center for Wheelchairs and Associated Rehabilitation Engineering, granting veterans to any assistive medical technology they could need after serving overseas. He holds 25 patents in wheelchair technology, including the a) MEBot, a stair-climbing wheelchair, b) PneuChair, a chair powered solely by compressed air, and c) Virtual Seating Coach, which helps control a wheelchair from the persons smartphone. These mobility devices and assistive technologies are, in part, responsible for increasing the quality of life for aging and disabled veterans and humans.

https://www.shrs.pitt.edu/people/rory-cooper

Beth Calhoun, Ph.D., MEd.
Associate Dean for Population Health, Professor of Population Health University of Kansas School of Medicine

Beth Calhoun's expertise in minority health and health disparities has engaged many in the importance of equity within medical care. While the extent to which race and sex play a role in the disparities of health services among various communities, Dr. Calhoun has investigated the biases of healthcare workers who are responsible for treating minority groups, specifically in heart failure. Among others, instances of excess critique towards women, questions of social support towards African American patients, and appropriateness of care were all found within her study. Biases among healthcare workers towards their patients can severely impact the treatment methods and care their patients receive, ultimately playing a role in the extent of their lifespan.

https://pophealth.uahs.arizona.edu/people/elizabeth-calhoun-phd-med

Alexander Fleming, M.D.
Founder and President, Kitalys Institute

Dr. Alexander Fleming, an endocrinologist, is Founder and Executive Chairman of Kinexum, a strategic advisory firm. At the FDA from 1986-98, he was responsible for landmark approvals of the first statin, metformin, and other endocrine and metabolic therapies. He also represented FDA at the WHO and the International Conference on Harmonization (ICH). Dr. Fleming coined the term, Metabesity, which refers to the constellation of major chronic diseases and the aging process itself, all which share common metabolic root causes and potential preventive therapies. He organized the first Congress on Metabesity in London in October 2017, followed by annual conferences since. Dr. Fleming founded in 2020 the not-for-profit Kitalys Institute as a means of producing Metabesity conferences and advancing interventions of any kind that can improve health and healthspan.

http://www.kinexum.com/index.php/about/leadership/clinical-development/zan-fleming

Ellis Unger, MD

Dr. Unger is the Director, Office of Cardiology, Hematology, Endocrinology, and Nephrology, in the Office of New Drugs (OND), Center for Drug Evaluation and Research (CDER), U.S. FDA. His Office oversees the regulation of drugs for cardiovascular, renal, benign hematological, endocrine, lipid, obesity, and bone disorders. Dr. Unger is a cardiologist who obtained his medical degree from the University of Cincinnati and trained in Cardiovascular Diseases at Johns Hopkins. Dr. Unger was a Senior Investigator in the NHLBI from 1983 to 1997 where he led efforts in translational science on experimental promotion of angiogenesis. Dr. Unger's FDA career has spanned 24 years, first in the Center for Biologics Evaluation and Research (CBER), and subsequently in the Center for Drug Evaluation and Research (CDER).