Building Equitable Artificial Intelligence in Health Care: Addressing Current Challenges and Exploring Future Opportunities

Speaker Biographies

Michael Cary is the Elizabeth C. Clipp Term Chair of Nursing at the Duke University School of Nursing, and was appointed as the inaugural AI Health Equity Scholar in January 2022. His work leverages complex biomedical and healthcare datasets and innovative data science approaches in order to identify risk factors that contribute to functional decline and rehospitalization among older adults, primarily older African Americans, who are at risk for disability. In February of 2021, Dr. Cary's work was formally recognized when he was named a recipient of the Raymond Gavins Distinguished Faculty Award conferred by the Samuel DuBois Cook Society, which recognizes, celebrates, and affirms the presence of African American students, faculty, and staff at Duke University.

Anuj Gangopadhyaya is a senior research associate in the Health Policy Center at the Urban Institute. His research focuses on the impact of safety net programs on health and well-being, family income, and education achievement outcomes for children in low-income families. He has focused on the impact of Medicaid eligibility expansion on children's education achievement, maternal and child health effects of the earned income tax credit program, and the impact of the Affordable Care Act Medicaid expansion on adult labor supply and fertility rates of women of reproductive age. He also helps lead Urban's Medicare simulation model (MCARE-SIM), estimating potential impacts of proposed policy changes on program spending, beneficiary spending, and use of services. Gangopadhyaya received his PhD in economics from the University of Illinois at Chicago.

 Dr. Maia Hightower, MD, MPH, MBA is the CEO and Founder of Equality AI, and former EVP, Chief Digital Transformation Officer at University of Chicago Medicine. Dr. Hightower is a leading voice in the intersection of healthcare and digital transformation. With her deep expertise and strategic leadership, she is at the forefront of the battle for ethical AI and against algorithmic bias, ensuring that the digital future of healthcare is equitable and just. A nationally sought-after speaker in Responsible AI, Dr. Hightower delves into the nuances of digital technology, health equity, diversity, and inclusion. She champions the idea that the value from the digital transformation of healthcare must be equitable for all stakeholders, especially the most vulnerable. At the heart of her mission is Equality AI, an early-stage investor-backed healthcare tech startup. In a world where data scientists have become an integral part of the care team, Equality AI solutions empower digitally enabled care teams to meet health equity goals. The startup focuses on responsible AI tools and strategies to develop algorithms that are fair and free from bias. Dr. Hightower's vision is clear: build an inclusive and equity-minded healthcare IT culture. She developed the Healthcare IT Equity Maturity Model (HITEM) to dismantle inherent biases in healthcare IT. She has been recognized by Health Data Management as one of the "Most Powerful Women in Healthcare IT" and by Becker's Hospital Review as a key influencer in the sector. With over fifteen years of executive leadership, Dr. Hightower has navigated the complexities of healthcare IT across academic medical centers, clinically integrated networks, and accountable care organizations. Her tenure at the University of Chicago Medicine as the EVP, Chief Digital Transformation Officer saw her spearheading the digital IT strategy and IT operations, driving transformative changes in patient care through technological innovation. Additionally, as the former Chief Medical Information Officer and Sr. Director of Health Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion at the University of Utah Health, she blended clinical insights with strategic IT initiatives, leveraging data and data-driven insights to ensure technological advancements aligned with health equity and the institutional strategic priorities. Dr. Hightower received her BA at Cornell University, MD, and MPH, from the University of Rochester School of Medicine, followed by residencies in Internal Medicine and Pediatrics at the University of California, San Diego. She also holds an MBA from the University of Pennsylvania's Wharton School.

Sarah Morriss is a research assistant in the Health Policy Center at the Urban Institute. She analyzes data and provides assistance with questionnaire development for Urban's Health Reform Monitoring Survey and Well-Being and Basic Needs Survey. She also contributes to policy briefs and papers on topics related to health equity, health care access, and families' experiences with federal safety net programs. Her research interests include disability and mental health policy issues. Moriss has a bachelor's degree in economics and public policy from the University of Chicago.

Anna Zink is a principal researcher at Chicago Booth's Center for Applied AI where she works on their Algorithmic Bias Initiative along with other projects related to the development and adoption of AI in health. Her research on algorithmic fairness applications in health care, in particular the evaluation of risk adjustment formulas used for health plan payment, has been published in statistics and economic journals including Biometrics and the American Journal of Health Economics. She is on the program committee for the ACM Conference on Fairness, Accountability, and Transparency and has served as an ethical reviewer for NeurIPS. Anna received her PhD in Health Policy from Harvard University where her research was supported by a National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellowship. Before receiving her degree, she worked as a data analyst at Acumen, LLC. where, among a small team of analysts, she partnered with the Department of Justice on cases of Medicare fraud, waste, and abuse and helped develop fraud surveillance methods. She also worked as a data engineer on the research team at athenahealth, a healthcare IT software and services company.