



MENTAL HEALTH MATTERS

PANEL DISCUSSIONS

SPEAKERS



Aday Adetosoye
PhD
Founder,
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G. Rumay Alexander
EdD, RN, FAAN
Senior Advisor,
American Nurses
Association



Janet Stickmon
MA
Professor of
Ethnic Studies
and Humanities,
Napa Valley College



Gary Taylor
LCSW
Assistant Professor,
Social Work
Department, Virginia
State University

MODERATOR



Kirsten Kathryn Meisinger
MD, MHCDS
Director of System
Transformation and
Leadership, Harvard
Center for Primary
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MORNING PANEL

Prioritizing Patients' Mental Well-Being and the Health Care Workforce that Serves Them

Since 2022, the [Weitzman Institute](https://www.weitzmaninstitute.org) Symposium has brought together industry leaders, clinicians, academic researchers, community members, and other stakeholders to address the most pressing health care issues of our time. On May 14, 2025, the fourth annual Weitzman Virtual Symposium focused on the theme Mental Health Matters, exploring the role of primary care, patients, and communities in providing equitable care amidst a mental health crisis.

The morning panel set out to examine the mental health needs of the health care workforce; the importance of shared leadership; and recommendations for how policies and institutions can better support the mental well-being of the health care workforce and the patient populations they serve.

With **Dr. Kirsten Kathryn Meisinger** serving as moderator, **Dr. Aday Adetosoye** opened the discussion by stressing the importance of mental health in the workplace and beyond, stating that mental health should be viewed as a foundational concept, not a byproduct or side benefit. **Gary Taylor** agreed, adding that whenever he works with fellow social workers, mental health professionals, or health care professionals in general, he stresses the importance of factors impacting well-being including and viewing mental health using a cultural-specific lens. **Dr. Janet Stickmon** added that she attempts to inject joy into discussions of wellness, and **Dr. G. Rumay Alexander** opened by stating the importance of managing relationships.

Ongoing Training and Feedback Solicitation

Panelists repeatedly mentioned the importance of ongoing training for staff, and in particular, leadership to best support team members and patients. This training and regular professional development is integral to creating an environment where staff thrive and patients ultimately benefit. Moreover, leadership should identify training areas based on staff experiences and feedback. Dr. Adetosoye suggested soliciting staff feedback via surveys and check-ins to inform ongoing discussions and gaps in training and development, while Dr. Meisinger stressed the importance of exit interviews. Dr. Stickmon mentioned the importance of bias.



Dr. Alexander stated that while some feedback may be humbling, “not all storms come to disrupt your life—some come to clear your path.” Ultimately, the team and patients benefit!

Leadership is Service

Panelists stressed that workplace, and subsequently patient, well-being is strongly tied to an organization’s leadership culture. Mr. Taylor stated, “Titles are one thing, but leadership is servitude.” Dr. Adetosoye added that leading with honesty and authenticity is important when guiding health care teams.

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*“You cannot talk your way out
of what you behaved your way into.”*

—Dr. G. Rumay Alexander

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Dr. Meisinger mentioned that as leaders, we should recognize that our teams are bringing their own experiences into the workplace and leaders should actively listen in order to better understand each individual’s mindsets. Dr. Alexander stressed that leaders must recognize cultural changes as team members join (or depart) the organization. Good leaders must be able to manage these cultural changes, staff concerns, and their own reactions to changes.

Community

Ultimately, panelists agreed that the backbone of both patient and workforce well-being is community. In literal terms, panelists and their teams work to improve the health and well-being of communities, but panelists also discussed the meaning of “community” based on their experiences and observations. To Dr. Adetosoye, community is “a collection of people who have shared values...and transcends race, skin color, and religion.”



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*“Something I’ve rarely seen
anyone do in healthcare
is turn the tools that
we supposedly promote for
our patients
onto ourselves.”*

—Dr. Kirsten Kathryn Meisinger

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She continued to stress that the backbone of community health isn’t “saving” a community but serving as a trusted community partner. Mr. Taylor agreed, stating that “coming in to tell the community what they need to be doing” is not effective. Dr. Stickmon mentioned the workplace community, stating that teams can be strengthened by recognizing and celebrating cultural and personality differences. Moreover, mental health professionals should practice self-care and set boundaries to improve their own mental health. Together, we can build a stronger mental health workforce that addresses care gaps and improves patient well-being.

SPEAKERS



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MD
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Alison Cerezo
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Bayo Curry-Winchell
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MODERATOR



Mia Keelys
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Director of
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AFTERNOON PANEL

Advances in Health Tech and Innovation to Promote Mental Well-Being

The afternoon panel focused on recent developments in digital technology, including artificial intelligence (AI), to promote mental well-being and increase mental health care access; current gaps and concerns around the use of technology in addressing mental health needs; and policy, research, and practice recommendations for improving inclusion of primary populations, health care teams, and systems in ongoing advancements in mental health care-related tech.

Dr. Mia Keelys, panel moderator, opened the discussion by reviewing the foundational concepts of AI, including reviewing basic terminology like large language models and predictive AI. Ms. Keelys also mentioned the idea of using AI for “the optimization of health care for all,” which will ideally entail efficiency, applicability to all populations, multistakeholder involvement in design and deployment, and patient privacy. With that, she opened up the discussion by asking **Dr. Nikole Benders-Hadi** to speak to AI’s role in mental health, who stressed its importance and the need to act with urgency to leverage AI in the mental health care space. **Dr. Alison Cerezo** agreed, emphasizing the immediate need to focus on the data used to build AI systems to ensure the technology serves all. **Mr. Erik Cardenas** expanded on gaps in new technologies for mental health care and the role stigma plays in perpetuating these gaps, despite pandemic-related progress. **Dr. Bayo Curry-Winchell** added that AI should be leveraged to improve access and further individualize care. Throughout the panel, the conversations focused on trust, accountability, and ongoing work.



Leveraging AI
in the mental
health care space

Trust and Representation

Mr. Cardenas stated that earning patient trust is just as important as creating an effective treatment plan, and requires strong relationships. Because of this, AI, he believes, will never replace relationships, but can help **identify distress, support patients between visits, and track emotional cues over time**. Dr. Benders-Hadi added that full transparency, sharing findings, and soliciting ideas within communities served shows the humanity behind mental health care and builds long-term trust.

Innovation Through Accountability

Despite AI’s promise, panelists emphasized the importance of ensuring patient privacy, which can also enhance trust, as mentioned above. Mr. Cardenas stated that alongside innovations, organizations must enact strict policies around, “data protection and privacy,” and be accountable should any data breaches or other issues arise. Dr. Cerezo mentioned the importance of ethics and privacy, as well as remaining accountable to create tools that benefit vulnerable populations. Dr. Benders-Hadi agreed, stressing that AI tools must be built responsibly, honoring privacy and quality concerns.

Ongoing Work: Dialog and Advocacy



“This level of healthy skepticism about AI is actually a really good thing. It ensures accountability and ethics, it protects privacy, and it mitigates bias.”

—Dr. Nikole Benders-Hadi

As panelists noted, internal policies and guidelines pertaining to AI use are integral to ensuring patient trust and building innovative technologies that benefit the health of all communities. Just as important, though, is advocating on behalf of beneficial AI systems with public policymakers and other decision makers. This ongoing dialog is important to build systems that help, not harm, our most vulnerable populations. Dr. Keeyes stated that every constituent can speak to their policymakers to advocate not just for AI-friendly policies and programs but for anything that enables your patients to receive the care they need. Dr. Curry-Winchell agreed, saying that discussions on AI and mental health must be viewed as long-term and ever evolving.

“If we’re serious about transforming mental health care through technology, we have to build systems that reflect the lives of the people that we serve, not just the ones that are easiest to reach.”

—Mr. Erik Cardenas



To view the 2025 Weitzman Symposium recordings and detailed speaker bios, visit <https://www.weitzmaninstitute.org/symposium2025/>.

For More Information

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