



2019 Management of Sickle Cell Disease Symposium

Special Thanks to our speakers, sponsors and event partners:



Rae Blaylark, Founder & Executive Director, Sickle Cell Foundation of Minnesota

Ms. Blaylark is the proud mother of a young adult living with sickle cell disease. Since 2004 Ms. Blaylark has served alongside the sickle cell community, educating others and advocating for those affected by this disease. For many years, Ms. Blaylark worked with Memorial Blood Centers in training and Education, donor recruitment and as a phlebotomy instructor. She currently serves as Sickle Cell Patient & Family Health Advocate and Care Coordinator at Children's Minnesota, supporting more than 200 patients and their families. In 2015, she founded Sickle Cell Foundation of MN as a means to increase community education and awareness as well as improving outcomes in the clinical and emergency room settings, leading to improved quality of life.



Beverley Francis-Gibson, President/CEO, Sickle Cell Disease Association of America

Ms. Francis-Gibson previously served as the Executive Director of the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI HC) of Howard County in Columbia, Maryland and has more than 25 years of experience serving non-profits and community foundations. She is Immediate Past Chair of the Board of Directors of Maryland Nonprofits. She is a 2009 Leadership Premiere Graduate and previous Board member of Leadership Howard County. Francis-Gibson is currently co-delegate for the Behavioral Health Work Group; member of the Child Fatality Review Team; Board Member of The Clarion Call and a member of the Local Health Improvement Coalition. She is a member of the Sickle Cell Disease Coalition and the Sickle Cell Steering Committee. She also serves on the National Minority Quality Forum's Sickle Cell Disease Working Group, the SCD Patient Survey Steering Committee, Sanofi Advisory Council and is a proud member of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc.



Christen Ebens, MD, Pediatric Blood & Marrow Transplant Physician, Masonic Children's Hospital

Christen Ebens, MD, MPH, is an Assistant Professor in Pediatric Blood and Marrow Transplant (BMT) at the University of Minnesota. The University of Minnesota is an internationally respected pioneer in BMT, performing the first successful human bone marrow transplant in 1968. Dr. Ebens's clinical and research interests include hematopoietic cell transplantation and gene therapy for non-malignant disorders including hemoglobinopathies including Sickle Cell Disease. With improved outcomes and exciting progress in research, Dr. Ebens is pleased to expand BMT options for patients at the University of Minnesota from matched sibling and unrelated donor transplants, to haploidentical "half matched" related donors (available now) and gene therapy of a patient's own cells (anticipated in 2019).



Stephen C. Nelson, MD, Pediatric Hematologist, Children's Minnesota

Stephen Nelson, MD, attended medical school and completed his pediatric residency at Eastern Virginia Medical School in Norfolk, Virginia. His pediatric hematology/oncology fellowship was completed at Duke University Medical Center in Durham, North Carolina. Dr. Nelson joined the hematology/oncology program at Children's of Minnesota in 1993. He is the director of the Sickle Cell Clinic. His interests include working to decrease racial health care disparities.



David K. Wood, PhD, Associate Professor, Biomedical Engineering, University of Minnesota

David received his B.S. in Physics in 2001 at North Carolina State University and received his Ph.D. in Physics in 2007 at the University of California, Santa Barbara. In 2012, David moved to the University of Minnesota, where he is now an Associate Professor in the department of Biomedical Engineering. David has spent the last

decade studying sickle blood disease and trying to understand the biophysical processes that lead to vaso-occlusive crises. The Living Devices Laboratory, under Dr. Wood's direction, has developed a range of tools to study mechanisms of vaso-occlusion and to evaluate potential new therapies. More recently, the lab has made a major revision to the fundamental mechanism of sickle cell disease and has developed new platforms to identify therapies that directly target the disease.



Kalpna Gupta, PhD, Professor of Medicine, Hematology, Oncology and Transplantation, University of Minnesota

Kalpna Gupta, PhD, is a professor of Medicine in the Division Hematology, Oncology, and Transplantation. Dr. Gupta's main research interests include pain and vascular biology as well as molecular mechanisms underlying the tumor microenvironment and pain. Her work is focused on the mechanisms of pain and pain therapy with opioids, cannabinoids, and evolving novel therapies. Her laboratory developed the paradigm that opioids used for pain influence the tumor microenvironment and promote cancer

progression. Another major focus of her laboratory is studying pain in sickle cell disease and discovering novel targets to treat chronic and acute pain. Currently her laboratory is deeply involved in basic and translational research leading to clinical outcomes on improving analgesia in cancer and sickle cell disease. Dr. Gupta has made profound efforts to increase diversity in medical research by mentoring trainees at different stages of their careers through NHLBI and American Society of Hematology Awards.



Anissa Keyes, MA, LMFT, LICSW, President/Therapist, Arubah Emotional Health

Anissa is the founder and owner of Arubah. She entered the field when she was 15 years old with the desire to help. She ended up spending several years in Social Services but not feeling like her contribution would help the clients sustain over time. She continued to desire to help guide individuals and families into a space of healing, and specifically wanted to provide support to the people that were least likely to receive the services. Her passion inevitably became focused on merging her spiritual beliefs, her understanding of the importance of emotional stability, and the connection with physical health and well being.



Yvonne Carroll, RN, JD, Director of Patient Service, Dept. Of Hematology, St. Jude Children's Research Hospital (SJCRH)

Yvonne graduated with a Bachelors of Nursing Degree from the University of Tennessee with honors and a Law degree from the University of Cincinnati. She joined SJCRH in 1999 in the Department of Hematology. Yvonne has been an advocate for the sickle cell community for more than 20 years. She serves as a member of the Governor's Genetic Advisory Committee for Newborn Screening, and is the President of the International Association of Sickle Cell Nurses and Professional Associates (IASCNAPA). She is project manager for multiple government and foundation grants including a recent \$1 million award from the LINKS Foundation to increase awareness and treatment for people with sickle cell disease. Yvonne has published several peer reviewed sickle cell articles and has participated as an invited reviewer on numerous research grants. She is a military veteran and served as a Judge Advocate General (JAG) in the US Navy. She has been married for 35 years and has two children. She is passionate about her commitment to sickle cell disease and continues to develop and participate in projects to further research and improve care for people with the disease.



Wanda Whitten-Shurney, MD, CEO and Medical Director, Sickle Cell Disease Association (SCDAA), Michigan Chapter

Dr. Shurney is also a pediatrician at the Comprehensive Sickle Cell Clinic at Children's Hospital of Michigan where she has provided outpatient care for children with sickle cell disease for the past 30 years. She is Director of the Newborn Sickle Cell Screening Program and has a particular interest in patient education and providing coping strategies for families. She serves on the Medical and Research Advisory Committee (MARAC) and as president of the Executive Leadership Council for the National SCDAA. Dr. Shurney, a product of the Detroit Public School system, completed her undergraduate work at the University of Michigan and attended Medical School at Howard University. She received her pediatric residency training at Children's Hospital of Michigan and spent a year in their Hematology Oncology Fellowship.



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