

NATIONAL HEALTH RESEARCH FORUM²⁰²⁶

INVESTING IN INNOVATION

BIOGRAPHIES

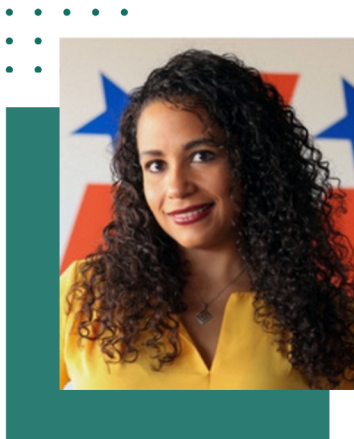


Amy Comstock Rick, JD
Director, Rare Disease Innovation Hub, U.S. Food and Drug Administration

Amy Comstock Rick, J.D., is the Director of FDA's Rare Disease Innovation Hub (the Hub). She serves in a cross-cutting role across FDA's Center for Drug Evaluations and Research (CDER), Center for Devices and Radiological Health (CDRH), and Center for Biologics Evaluation and Research (CBER) to facilitate implementation of the Hub. She also works closely with centers to develop and carry out a rare disease strategic agenda.

Prior to joining the FDA, Ms. Rick served as Principal Consultant at Leavitt Partners, focusing on health policy matters, with a primary focus on rare disease and medical product development. Before Leavitt Partners, she served as President and Chief Executive Officer of the Food and Drug Law Institute (FDLI), a non-profit organization dedicated to providing an innovative, open, balanced exchange of ideas and viewpoints across the field of food and drug law.

Before joining FDLI, Ms. Rick was Chief Executive Officer of the Parkinson's Action Network. Ms. Rick also served as President of the Coalition for the Advancement of Medical Research and on the Boards of Directors for Research America, the National Health Council, and the American Brain Coalition. Ms. Rick had previous federal service as a career attorney at the U.S. Department of Education from 1988 to 1998, focusing primarily on the field of government ethics. She was the Senate-confirmed Director of the U.S. Office of Government Ethics from 2000 to 2003 and Associate Counsel to the President in the White House Counsel's Office from 1998 to 2000. She received a Bachelor of Arts degree from Bard College and a Juris Doctor degree from the University of Michigan.



Erin Darbouze, MPH
Senior Director of Policy & Advocacy, Research!America

Erin Darbouze, MPH, is the Senior Director of Policy & Advocacy at Research!America, where she leads efforts to advance medical research, foster innovation, and drive scientific discovery. She has over 15 years of experience in government relations, issue advocacy, and strategic planning in Washington, D.C. Before joining Research!America, Erin served as the Health Policy Manager at Fight Colorectal Cancer, where she worked closely with stakeholders to improve prevention, early detection, and access to care while advocating for increased research funding and the acceleration of new treatments and therapies. A Florida native, Erin earned her bachelor's degree in political science from the University of Florida and a master's degree in public health from George Washington University. She currently resides in Washington, D.C., with her husband, Dave, and their two cats.



Ellie Dehoney

Senior Vice President of Policy and Advocacy, Research!America

Ellie Dehoney is the Senior Vice President of Policy and Advocacy at the nonpartisan, nonprofit advocacy alliance, Research!America. Previously, she served as legislative director for Sen. Sherrod Brown (D-OH), and as health legislative assistant and legislative director for Brown in the House of Representatives. Ellie's background also includes serving as a health legislative assistant for former Senate Minority Leader Tom Daschle (D-SD), as a special assistant in the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation (ASPE) within the Department of Health and Human Services, and in nonprofit and private sector roles focused on health care financing and delivery. Ellie currently serves on the Committee on Advocacy and Public Policy of AcademyHealth and the Nominating Committee of the National Health Council. Ellie received a Bachelor's degree in Economics and English from the College of William & Mary and a Master of Science in Public Health degree from UNC-Chapel Hill.



Julie Gerberding, MD

President and Chief Executive Officer, Foundation for the National Institutes of Health

Dr. Julie Louise Gerberding is the President and CEO of the Foundation for the National Institutes of Health (FNIH), a non-profit organization that builds public-private-patient biomedical research partnerships to address important medical challenges in support of the NIH mission. She also co-chairs the CSIS Bipartisan Alliance for Global Health Security. Dr. Gerberding formerly served as President of Merck Vaccines and as Executive Vice President and Chief Patient Officer at Merck & Co., Inc. From 2003-2009, Dr. Gerberding led the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Her current board service includes HilleVax, Mayo Clinic, National Health Council, and Case Western Reserve University. Dr. Gerberding is a member of the National Academy of Medicine and the adjunct faculties of the University of California, San Francisco, and Case Western Reserve University.



Caitlin Grzeskowiak, PhD

Chief Research and Innovation Officer, Epilepsy Foundation

Grzeskowiak joined the Epilepsy Foundation in 2020 as the senior director of research. In this role, she helped launch a virtual accelerator course for epilepsy startups to provide expertise and guidance to commercialize products that improve the lives of people with epilepsy; and EDEN, a real-world data collection platform designed to improve patient access to information about their epilepsy. She has also led the implementation of successful programs including: the Epilepsy Foundation's Pipeline Conference, Research Roundtable for Epilepsy, My Seizure Gauge Initiative, Shark Tank, Human Epilepsy Project 2, and Junior Investigators Fellowships.

Prior to the Epilepsy Foundation, Grzeskowiak was director of research at Project Data Sphere, a nonprofit organization focused on breaking down barriers to cancer clinical trial data sharing. There, she focused on major health equity initiatives to bring earlier detection testing to medically underserved communities and improving disease classification databases to inform retrospective analysis of adverse events resulting from emerging therapies. Grzeskowiak also served as manager of Science Initiatives at Research!America, where she focused on advocacy and strategic policy initiatives for the scientific community.

She holds a doctorate in Molecular and Human Genetics from Baylor College of Medicine. Her research focused on developing platform technologies to run large-scale genetic screens. Grzeskowiak also completed a postdoctoral fellowship at Stanford University School of Medicine where she developed a patented technology ultimately designed to predict cancer patients' response to immunotherapy. While at Stanford, she also completed the Ignite Program through the Stanford University Graduate School of Business, which focuses on commercializing technology from the lab.



Alicia Jackson, PhD

Director, Advanced Research Projects Agency for Health

Dr. Alicia Jackson was appointed by President Trump as Director of the Advanced Research Projects Agency for Health (ARPA-H) and sworn in on October 20, 2025. Dr. Jackson reports directly to U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Secretary.

Dr. Jackson joins ARPA-H from Evernow, a company she founded and led as CEO, focused on transforming women's health and longevity during menopause. Previously, she served as a Program Manager and, subsequently, Deputy Director of the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency's Biological Technologies Office, guiding an investment portfolio across biodefense, novel medicine development, and biomanufacturing to protect the nation while advancing groundbreaking scientific capabilities. She has served as a Senate policy advisor, as well as co-founder, Board Member, and advisor of several biotech and health startups, including OOVA, ImmuneBridge, and Drawbridge Health.

Dr. Jackson holds a Ph.D. in materials science from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.



Jenny Luray

Senior Vice President of Strategy and Public Engagement Research!America

Jenny Luray is the Senior Vice President for Strategy and Public Engagement at Research!America, the U.S.-based nonprofit research advocacy alliance. While in leadership positions in government, industry, and the nonprofit sector, Jenny has championed a range of issues across the medical and public health ecosystems. This includes closing gaps in women's health research, securing access to innovative diagnostic tests, safeguarding government-to-industry technology transfer and strengthening engagement between scientists and the public.

Jenny was Chief of Staff to U.S. Senator Barbara Mikulski, Legislative Director to Congresswoman Nita Lowey, and Deputy Assistant to the President in the Clinton White House. She directed U.S. policy and government affairs for two global life science companies, BD and Abbott, and led the Susan G. Komen Advocacy Alliance as its president.

Jenny currently serves on the Brown University School of Public Health Board of Governors, Coalition for Trust in Health and Science Board of Directors, National Academy of Medicine Communications Advisory Group, and the Johns Hopkins University Alacrity Center for Health and Longevity in Mental Illness Community Advisory Board. She earned a B.A. in Sociology from Brown University and a Master in Public Administration from Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government.



Alina Meltaus

Chief of Staff, National Security Commission on Emerging Biotechnology

Alina Meltaus is Chief of Staff at the National Security Commission on Emerging Biotechnology (NSCEB), where she helps lead the Commission's efforts to translate its recommendations into federal action to strengthen U.S. biotechnology leadership. She advises Commissioners on organizational and policy priorities, leads external affairs and legislative strategy, and represents the Commission before policymakers, industry and academic leaders, the national security community, and the public. Alina brings more than 12 years of experience in government and public service including senior roles in the U.S. Senate, most recently as Administrative Director for Senator Jon Ossoff. She holds a BA from Allegheny College and is based in Washington, DC.



Matthew J. Memoli, MD

Principal Deputy Director, National Institutes of Health

Matthew J. Memoli, M.D., M.S., is the Principal Deputy Director of the National Institutes of Health. He served as Acting NIH Director from January 22, 2025, to March 31, 2025. Dr. Memoli has worked at NIH for more than 20 years, most recently serving as director of the Clinical Studies Unit within the Laboratory of Infectious Diseases (LID), part of NIH's National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases. He previously served as a staff clinician in the same laboratory. Dr. Memoli is an internationally known expert in the field of respiratory viruses. He has won multiple awards for his work, including two NIH Director's Awards, multiple National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID) Merit Awards, and a National Center for Advancing Translational Sciences Director's Award. He also received the 2017 NIAID Outstanding Mentor Award for his work training clinical fellows and other trainees. In addition, he served on the Governor of Virginia's Medical Advisory Board from 2022 through 2024. The LID Clinical Studies Unit, a program developed by Dr. Memoli, conducts clinical and translational research, primarily on influenza and other respiratory diseases. His team leads clinical trials to evaluate investigational vaccines and treatments, including novel approaches developed by NIH colleagues. Dr. Memoli has also led clinical studies focused on influenza transmission and immunity, as well as research to understand better how respiratory viruses infect and cause disease in different populations. He has collaborated with researchers across NIH to develop serosurvey techniques to estimate the prevalence of certain diseases in specific populations. Dr. Memoli is a graduate of the College of William and Mary and received his Master of Science in microbiology from Thomas Jefferson University. He completed medical school at St. George's University School of Medicine. He completed his residency in internal medicine at Georgetown University's program at Washington Hospital Center. Dr. Memoli joined NIH in 2005 to complete his fellowship in infectious diseases.



Raj Panjabi, MD

Senior Partner, Flagship Pioneering

Raj Panjabi is responsible for leading Flagship's Preemptive Health and Medicine Initiative, which is pioneering a new field to protect, maintain, or improve people's health before they get sick.

Raj is former White House Senior Director and globally recognized as a distinguished authority in healthcare, public policy, entrepreneurship, and technology.

As White House Senior Director, Raj served as President Biden's top pandemic and health official at the National Security Council, where he played a pivotal role in the largest vaccination campaign in history against COVID-19 and responses to public health crises, including mpox, influenza and Ebola. He played a lead role executing the 2022 National Biodefense Strategy and American Pandemic Preparedness Plan, coordinating over \$12 billion in annual investment across 16 federal agencies in biodefense, including in diagnostics, therapeutics, and vaccines. Raj also helped oversee implementation of the President's 2022 Executive Order to Advance Biotechnology and Biomanufacturing Innovation and the 2022 U.S. Global Health Security Act, authorizing \$5 billion and expanding health investments across 50 countries. He co-developed President Biden's COVID-19 and health security initiatives with the G7, G20, and regional bodies, and efforts to organize Presidential Summits, launch the Pandemic Fund at the World Bank, negotiate the WHO International Health Regulations and Pandemic Accord, and uphold the UN Biological Weapons Convention.

Previously, Raj led the President's Malaria Initiative, helping launch the world's first malaria vaccine, create a strategy to prevent 1 billion cases, and manage a \$800 million enterprise protecting 700 million people across 30 countries. Raj is co-founder and former CEO of Last Mile Health, a global organization transforming community health systems.

One of TIME's 100 Most Influential People in the World and TIME's 50 Most Influential People in Healthcare, and twice named to the FORTUNE World's 50 Greatest Leaders list, Raj has received the TED Prize, Clinton Global Citizen Award, and World Economic Forum's Social Entrepreneur of the Year award. He was knighted by President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf and the Government of Liberia. He trained in biochemistry, epidemiology and biostatistics, and medicine at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Johns Hopkins University, Harvard Medical School, and Massachusetts General Hospital.

Raj has been a senior advisor to several biotech companies and has served on the boards of private sector companies, non-profits, and other initiatives. He currently serves on the boards of WHO Foundation, Skoll Foundation, Last Mile Health, among others, and on the Bipartisan Commission on Biodefense. He serves on the faculty at Harvard Medical School and Brigham and Women's Hospital.



Sudip Parikh, PhD

Chief Executive Officer, American Association for the Advancement of Science

Sudip Parikh, Ph.D., became the 19th chief executive officer of the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) and executive publisher of the Science family of journals in January 2020. The son of Indian immigrants, Parikh completed undergraduate studies at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Early in his career Parikh was a Presidential Management Intern at the NIH and was awarded a National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellowship while earning his Ph.D. in macromolecular structure and chemistry from the Scripps Research Institute in La Jolla, CA. He has spent two decades at the nexus of science, policy, and business and is an active member of the scientific advocacy community.



Russ Paulsen

President and Chief Executive Officer, Research!America

Prior to joining Research!America, Russ has served as an executive at America's most iconic nonprofits, as well as smaller organizations. Most recently, he founded United for Cures, an alliance of patient advocacy organizations focused on increasing federal funding for medical research, while also serving as President and COO of UsAgainstAlzheimer's.

Under Russ's leadership at UsAgainstAlzheimer's, the organization quadrupled in size and it served more than a million Americans. Key policy achievements include increasing funding for Alzheimer's research through the NIH, establishing Medicare coverage for Alzheimer's treatments, and prompting the creation of a federal goal to prevent Alzheimer's disease through risk-reduction.

At United Way Worldwide, Russ was the inaugural Vice President of 211, a nationwide network that connects millions of people in every American community with services they need. Prior to that, a team Russ led at the American Red Cross created a national public-health campaign to reduce deaths from home fires. That campaign has saved more than 2,500 lives since its launch and made more than 1,325,000 high-risk homes safer. Before that, Russ led a \$200 million recovery effort in aftermath of Hurricane Katrina which, in addition to rebuilding thousands of homes, helped rebuild the mental health system of coastal Louisiana and Mississippi.

Russ earned Master's degree in Political Science at the University of California, Berkeley and a Bachelor's from the University of California, Riverside. He and his wife are proud parents of two young adults who call helping others the "family business."



John Reed, MD, PhD
Executive Vice President, Innovative Medicine, R&D
Johnson & Johnson

As Executive Vice President, Innovative Medicine, R&D and Johnson & Johnson (J&J) Executive Committee member, John's mission is to focus the best research and development teams in the world at the intersection of unmet medical need and innovation to change the trajectory of human health. A biomedical research leader with a distinguished career across nonprofit, academia, and industry, John encourages a culture that is fast-paced and open to reimagining how life-saving medicines are discovered, developed and delivered. Employing multiple drug modalities, John's team works across a wide range of areas including oncology, immunology, neuroscience and select disease areas where there is high unmet need.

Prior to joining Johnson & Johnson in April 2023, John held executive leadership positions at Sanofi and Roche, serving on their respective executive committees. He served as CEO of Sanford-Burnham Medical Research Institute (now Sanford Burnham Prebys) where he established multiple therapeutic area-aligned research centers and platform technology centers. John has authored more than 900 research publications and holds more than 130 patents. He was recognized among the top 10 most cited researchers in life sciences and medicine and still ranks among the world's top 100 most highly cited scientists. He is a fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science and the recipient of many honors and awards.

An accomplished scientist and leader, John holds a Bachelor of Arts in Chemistry from the University of Virginia, Charlottesville and an M.D. and Ph.D. (Immunology) from the University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine.



Keith Yamamoto, PhD
Vice Chancellor for Science Policy and Strategy, Director of Precision
Medicine, and Professor of Cellular and Molecular Pharmacology,
University of California, San Francisco

Dr. Keith R. Yamamoto is vice chancellor for science policy and strategy, director of precision medicine, and professor emeritus of cellular and molecular pharmacology at UCSF. Following his PhD from Princeton University, Yamamoto joined the UCSF faculty in 1976. His research focused on signaling and transcriptional regulation by nuclear receptors, applying mechanistic and systems approaches to pure molecules, cells and whole organisms. He has led or served on many national committees focused on public and scientific policy, public understanding and support of biological research, science education and training the biomedical workforce, research funding, peer review, open science, justice and equity in developing applications of science and technology innovations, and DEI and anti-racism. He is President of the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS), chair of the Coalition for the Life Sciences, co-chair of the NASEM Roundtable on Aligning Incentives for Open Science and of the Science and Technology Action Committee, vice chair of the California Initiative to Advance Precision Medicine Advisory Council. He sits on the Boards of Directors of the Public Library of Science and Rapid Science, the Governing Board of the California Institute for Regenerative Medicine, the Board of Counselors for the Radiation Effects Research Foundation, the Advisory Board for Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory, the Council of EBRC, and the Scientific Advisory Board of Mate Bioservices. He was elected to the National Academy of Sciences, National Academy of Medicine, American Academy of Arts and Sciences, American Academy of Microbiology, and is a fellow of AAAS.

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