2018 Clinical Conference Speaker Bios

Kerry Adams, MSc R.SLP (C)
Kerry is a registered and certified Speech-Language Pathologist and has worked exclusively with the ALS Clinic in Edmonton (Canada) since 2006. She received her B.Sc. in Speech Pathology & Audiology from the University of Alberta in 1992. She then went on to complete her M.Sc. with a focus on clinical education and supervision. Kerry has worked in a variety of settings including private practice, continuing care, and adult neurogenic outpatient programs in Edmonton, Calgary, and the United States. She enjoys working with PALS and their families and is passionate about providing unique and practical solutions to improving patients’ understanding of ALS.

Mary Anderson, MA, CCC-SLP
Mary received a BS in Hearing and Speech Sciences from Ohio University and a MA in Speech-Language Pathology from the University of Akron. She is currently the section chief of Speech Pathology at the Louis Stokes VA Medical Center. Mary has given presentations on communication disorders and dysphagia at the VA national level. Mary currently performs comprehensive evaluations and treatment for disorders of speech, swallowing, communication devices, voice, and is lead clinician working with Cleveland VA interdisciplinary ALS team.

Erin J Arra, MS, RD
Erin Arra completed a BS in Dietetics from the University of Dayton and a MS in Nutrition from Case Western University. She completed the Dietetic Internship at the Cleveland VA Medical Center. Erin is a Registered Dietitian at the Cleveland VA Medical Center and the RD on the ALS interdisciplinary team at the Cleveland VA ALS Center. Erin has done several presentations on Nutrition and ALS at the national level. Erin holds a publication titled “Nutrition management methods effective in increasing weight, survival time and functional status in ALS patients: a systematic review.

Rebecca Axline, LCSW
Rebecca is a Supervisory Clinical Social Worker who has over 30 years of clinical social work experience in a variety of settings including medical, active duty military bases, veteran hospitals, employee assistance, hospice care, and school districts. She has management experience in psychiatric care, employee assistance and customer service. Her current role, starting 2006, has been the development of an outpatient Social Work program at Houston Methodist Neurological Institute. She continues to provide program development and clinical intervention with a primary focus of helping patients and family members cope with the stress of diagnosis and treatment of neurological disorders and illnesses.
Hollie Baker, LMSW
Hollie graduated with her Bachelor of Arts degree in social work from Wichita State University in 2005, and received her Master in Social Work from Newman University in 2006. Hollie has extensive knowledge in medical social work and worked within the hospital setting for several years. Hollie has been with The Mid America Chapter since 2016.

Jane W. Barton, MTS, MASM, CSA
Jane W. Barton, author of Caregiving for the GENIUS, is a passionate national speaker, writer, and listener. As the founder of Cardinal, LLC, she provides educational programs, books, videos, podcasts, and blogs to assist people in confronting the daunting challenges posed by aging, serious illness, and the end of life. Jane is well versed in the areas of grief and bereavement, caregiving, hospice and palliative care, change and transition, and spirituality and health. She presents innovative, transformational programs across the country. As the Caregiving Ambassador for AARP Colorado (2014-2018), she offers educational programs throughout the state of Colorado.

Kellie Branch-Dircks, MSW, LCSW
Ms. Branch-Dircks has been a social worker for the past 27+ years. Prior to accepting the role of Care Service Coordinator with the Greater Chicago Chapter in January 2016, she was the Advanced Care Planning and Palliative Care Coordinator for a local hospital system. She is First Steps certified from Gunderson-Lutheran and has extensive experience in quality of life issues. In addition to her role with ALS, she has an active private practice that offers equine assisted counseling, traditional talk counseling, and is licensed in 38+ states, which allows her to provide tele-health counseling services to patient’s in rural areas or who are unable to attend counseling in a traditional setting. She is also the Clinical director for Crossroads Programs in Pekin, IL, where they provide specialized mental health programs both on-site and via webinars, and the clinical consultant for Salem 4 Youth boys residential program in Flanagan, IL.

Nancy Brenner, LCSW
Nancy is a Patient Services Coordinator for the Greater New York Chapter. She has over 30 years’ experience in the medical field and has been with the ALS Association since 2014. Nancy joined the Chapter team to help grow their service area/region and will speak with experience on the chapter’s success in this area.

James Brinton, MS, CCC- SLP
James is the Assistive Technology Coordinator for LC Technologies, Inc. He speaks on the use of eye gaze systems for individuals with disabilities and has presented professionally for several diverse
organizations across the world. He has worked in providing communication options across the lifespan for his clients.

**Alisa Brownlee, ATP, CAPS**
Alisa, Clinical Manager, Assistive Technology Services, is a 23-year staff member the ALS Association working for both the Greater Philadelphia Chapter and the National Office. Alisa speaks, blogs, writes articles and uses social media to increase awareness of ALS and the use of assistive technology. Her specialty areas are communication, computer access, and electronic aids for daily living, and home modifications. She is a strong advocate for patient rights with elected officials, insurance companies, and other healthcare providers. Alisa is 2000 graduate of the California State University Northridge with a Graduate Certificate in Assistive Technology. She has a Bachelor of Science Degree in Hospitality Management and a Bachelor of Arts Degree in History from East Stroudsburg University. She is a Certified Assistive Technology Professional (ATP) through the Rehabilitation Engineering and Assistive Technology Society of North America (RESNA) and is a Certified Aging in Place Specialist through the National Association of Home Builders (NAHB).

**Lisa Bruening, MS, CCC-SLP**
Lisa is a licensed speech-language pathologist with over 25 years of experience working with persons with diverse communication impairments. She is skilled in assessing verbal and nonverbal communication modalities. She has worked at The ALS Association Northern Ohio Chapter since 2002. She estimates she works with over 200 persons with ALS each year. Each person with ALS is an individual with preferences and needs specific to their disease course, family/friend supports, living situation and coping strategies. Lisa has been employed in multiple settings including hospital, clinic, private practice and skilled nursing facilities, as well as university training programs and voluntary health organizations.

**Betty Carter, MA, CCC, SLP**
Betty earned her Bachelor of Science degree in Communication Disorders at the University of Houston in 2000 and her Master of Arts degree in Communication Disorders at the University of Houston in 2002. She began her career as a Speech Language Pathologist in the public-school setting where she worked with a variety of students with speech, language, and cognitive impairments from preschool through high school. In her most recent position, she served as a Speech Language Pathologist, clinical supervisor, and Dallas area Assistive Technology (AT) Program Manager with Therapy 2000, Inc., a pediatric home health agency in Texas. Betty has specialized in evaluating and treating pediatric patients with augmentative communication needs, providing AAC training and support to families and therapists in the field as well as assisting other Speech Language Pathologists with the AAC evaluation and funding process.
Betty holds the Certificate of Clinical Competence in Speech Language Pathology from the American Speech Language and Hearing Association (ASHA), a state license in Speech Language Pathology in the state of Texas, and is a member of the Texas Speech Language and Hearing Association (TSHA).

**Melissa Coll, MSW, LSW**

Melissa MSW, LSW has been a licensed, practicing social worker since 1993. She received her Bachelor of Social Work from Millersville University and her Master of Social Work from Temple University. Most of Melissa’s experience has been in medical social work including hospice and bereavement work. Melissa has been a social worker with the ALS Association of the Greater Philadelphia chapter for 10 years.

**Anne Cooney, MSW, LSW**

Anne has been a licensed, practicing social worker since 1988. She received her Bachelor of Social Work from McDaniel College (formerly known as Western Maryland College) and her Master of Social Work from Temple University. Most of Anne’s experience has been in medical social work including hospice and bereavement work. Anne has been a social worker with the ALS Association of the Greater Philadelphia chapter for 6 years.

**Trinity Deibert, MS, CCC-SLP**

Trinity is a home health speech pathologist. She was awarded the Oregon Association for Home Care 2016 Therapist of the Year award for her work with PALS. Trinity specializes in AAC serving many the people with ALS living throughout the Portland metro and surrounding areas. She is a highly-active provider of SGDs, and specializes in personalizing and programming communication software, as well as in customizing access methods. She is a tremendous resource and advocate for many of the people and families living with ALS.

**Peggy Dellea, MS, OT/L**

Peggy works within the Boston Children's Hospital Augmentative Communication Program (ACP) ALS service, providing assistive technology services focusing on computer and AAC access. Her experience includes work at the Assistive Technology Center at Spaulding Rehabilitation Hospital in Boston, MA. She participates in research regarding use of a brain-computer interface as a communication tool. Peggy earned a Bachelor of Science in Occupational Therapy and Master of Science in Biomedical Engineering from Boston University.

**John J. Doherty, OTR, ATP/SMS**

Jay has 23 years of experience working in the field of assistive technology with a concentration on complex rehab. Jay has earned his ATP and SMS certifications through RESNA. Throughout his career he has worked in both Rehabilitation and assistive technology environments with both adults and children.
Jay’s current role with Quantum Rehab is to provide direction and leadership to the Quantum field sales team in clinical education and development of the field reps. He also develops and presents a variety of educational courses and ensures the Quantum Rehab field sales staff are educated on products and their benefits.

Oded Ben Dov
Oded is fluent in 11 languages, two spoken and nine programming. It was this fluency that enabled him to solve the most important question of his professional career – “Hello, my name is Giora, I can’t move my hands or legs. Can you make me a smartphone I could use?”

A globally recognized technology expert turned social entrepreneur, today Ben-Dov is CEO of Sesame Enable, creator of the first touch-free smartphone app for quadriplegics and people with disabilities called Open Sesame, and an advocate for life-changing, technology solutions for people with physical challenges.

Sally Dwyer, MEd
Sally has been with the ALS Association Mid-America (aka Keith Worthington) Chapter since January 1995. She holds both master’s and bachelor’s degrees in education and taught for 11 years, As Director of Programs & Services, Sally oversees the Chapter’s care services, education and advocacy in Kansas, Nebraska and the western two-thirds of Missouri. Sally and her team of five – 2 nurses and 3 social workers – use a service delivery model that incorporates case management and programmatic approaches. Clinical care is provided through six ALS clinics including two that are certified, one that is a recognized treatment center and one that is a telemedicine clinic. Last year, the Chapter’s care services department served approximately 650 individuals plus their caregivers and family members.

Mary Jo Elmo, APRN, CNP
Mary Jo is the Nurse Practitioner and Project Manager for Diaphragm Pacing at University Hospitals Cleveland Medical Center. She received her MSN from Case Western Reserve University in 2003 and has practiced as a CNP since that time. She manages the world’s largest group of DP patients with various diagnosis including spinal cord injury and ALS. She holds certifications from the American Nurses Credentialing Center and is a member of the American Academy of Nurse Practitioners. Prior to working in Diaphragm Pacing she spent 14 years in the surgical intensive care unit. She has worked with a variety of urinary catheters throughout her career.

Chelsea Ezell, MA, CCC, SLP
Chelsea earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in Communication Sciences and Disorders from the University of Mississippi and completed her Master in Communication Sciences and Disorder from the University of Houston. She has worked in the field of assistive technology and augmentative/alternative
communication her entire career, serving children who use communication devices. Prior to joining PRC, Chelsea worked for a public school in Mississippi as a Speech Language Pathologist. In her most recent position, she collaborated on a multidisciplinary team at a pediatric outpatient clinic, treating children with a variety of diagnoses. She has extensive experience providing training and technical support to clinicians, teachers, and families of device users. Chelsea holds the Certificate of Clinical Competence from the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA), has a Texas Speech Language Pathology License and is a member of Houston Association for Communication Disorders (HACD). She is also a member of the ASHA Division 12 (AAC division). Chelsea was formerly a Language Acquisition through Motor Planning (LAMP) certified professional.

Sara M Feldman, DPT, PT, ATP
Sara Feldman, PT, DPT, ATP is the Physical Therapist and the Assistive Technology Professional at the MDA/ALS Center of Hope at Temple University Lewis Katz School of Medicine in Philadelphia, PA. She began her work with individuals with ALS/MND in 1994. Sara is co-chair of the NEALS Physical Therapy Committee and served as the Clinical Evaluator on the Executive Board from 2013-2018. She is the Clinical Liaison for the ALS Hope Foundation. In 2013 she was elected to the Board of Directors of the International Alliance of ALS/MND Associations and is Co-Chair of the Allied Professionals Forum.

Laurie Fieldman, LCSW
Laurie B. Fieldman, LCSW, is the Director of Social Services for the Les Turner ALS Foundation in Skokie, IL. Laurie has 21 years of experience working with the children in ALS families. She has presented to local, national and international audiences on young carers, the ALS couple, and the ALS family. She also founded and directed a camp for grieving children for 8 years.

Marinella D Galea, MD
Dr. Galea has been practicing since 2000 at the Bronx VAMC, where she is currently the Chief of Spinal Cord Injury. Since 2014 she directs the ALS Clinic leading the efforts to create a state-of-the-art ALS Center. She is assistant professor of PM&R at Mount Sinai School of Medicine and Internal Medicine at Columbia School of Medicine. Dr. Galea has published in several peer review journals and she has presented at the ALSA Clinical Conference, the Association of SCI Professional (ASCIP), and The National Telehealth meeting. She is a Black Belt Lean Coach and has led several successful improvement projects.

Chris Gibbons, PhD, CCC-SLP
Dr. Gibbons has worked in a variety of AAC clinical, research, and industry settings as a private practitioner, assistive technology specialist, and policy level consultant. For more than 20 years he has focused solely on advocating for and contributing to SGD user success through increased access efficiencies and by working to improve funding for SGDs. Current projects are focused on fully
integrated AAC systems designed to provide the greatest opportunity for participation and personal development. Chris is the VP of Education and Assessment at Smartbox, Inc.

**Raghav Govindarajan, MD**

Dr. Govindarajan is a board-certified neurologist and neuromuscular physician and an assistant professor of neurology at University of Missouri. Dr. Govindarajan currently serves as the medical director of the ALS Association Clinic at the University of Missouri and was instrumental in its founding. Dr. Govindarajan has a strong passion for research in all aspects of ALS patient care and has served as a Co-I on a $300,000 grant in developing antisense oligonucleotide therapy for a canine model of ALS, granted by the ALS Association. Furthermore Dr. Govindarajan also received the American Academy of Neurology (AAN) grant for identifying serological biomarkers, which can predict onset of dementia in Parkinson and ALS patients. Dr. Govindarajan has more than 30 peer-reviewed publications, more than 30 teaching awards. He serves as a PCORI grant reviewer and PCORI ambassador. He was awarded the Schwartz Compassionate Care Giver Award and Leonard Tow Humanism award for the care of ALS patients.

**Judith Guarnieri, MSN, CRNP**

Judith is the Nurse-Practitioner Coordinator at the Jefferson Weinberg ALS Center in Philadelphia, PA. and has over 30 years’ experience working in neurology.

**Gaurav Guliani, MD**

Dr. Guliani chose to pursue a career in neurology because he always enjoyed taking care of people and found the brain and nervous system to be fascinating. The chronic care aspect of neuromuscular medicine allows Dr. Guliani to get to know his patients and their families, which is rewarding to him. His priority is clinical patient care, and he enjoys managing neurology patients with headaches, neuropathy, muscle disease, amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS), multiple sclerosis (MS), and stroke. Dr. Guliani works to provide the best care through shared decision-making, promoting a team approach and involving patients and their family members in all decisions to find the best treatment options. His goal is always to improve each patients' quality of life.

**Sue Hasson**

Sue has over 42 years of experience as a nurse. For the past 29 years she has worked in neurology, with the most recent 3 years as Dr. Stanley Appel’s clinical nurse. She works with all his patients and families with neurodegenerative disorders and assists his ALS coordinator.

**Nancy Hoke, RN, BSN**

Nancy earned her BS in Nursing from Oregon Health Sciences University. She practiced in ICU, trauma, research, education and toxicology prior to joining the Providence ALS Center in Portland, Oregon, in
2009. She continues to practice as an ALS Nurse Coordinator, guiding patients and families through their ALS journey. Nancy provides hands-on care, coordinates care within the multidisciplinary team, and develops close relationships with patients and families. As a nurse on the front lines, she is intimately involved in end of life discussions and is committed to providing compassionate care - helping patients both live well and end well.

Gail Houseman, MSN, CRNP, RN, CNS-BC
Gail, has been a Regional Nurse Coordinator for the ALS Association Greater Philadelphia Chapter for the past 18 years. Gail’s professional focus throughout her career has been on mental health and home care.

Ileana Howard, MD
Dr. Howard is the Medical Co-Director of the Interdisciplinary ALS team at the VA Puget Sound, where she oversees care for one of the most active Veteran ALS programs in the country. After obtaining degrees at Smith College and Harvard Medical School followed by PM&R residency at the University of Washington, she now serves as Outpatient Medical Director for Rehabilitation Care and Clinical Associate Professor of Rehabilitation Medicine at the University of Washington. Some of her many clinical interests include electrodiagnosis, optimizing quality of life and function for persons with ALS, quality improvement, spasticity management, and healthcare provider education.

Theresa Imperato, RN
Theresa is a member of the Greater NY Chapter Staff and has started three different ALS Clinics in the Greater NY area during her tenure. Two of those clinics have gone on to become ALSA Certified Centers, and the 3rd is in the application stage. She has been a support group facilitator for over 20 years and has coordinated and participated in several Symposia and Educational Programs at the Greater NY Chapter. She is a return member of the ALSA Clinical Conference Committee, as well.

Kipling A. Jackson
Kip is a person living with ALS, being diagnosed with ALS on July 3rd, 2012. He graduated with a Bachelor of Science in Electronics and Computer Engineering Technology from the University of Arkansas at Little Rock in 2004. Jackson retired on disability from Windstream – a telecommunications company – in 2013. He refuses to let ALS become a death sentence. He lives in Sherwood, Arkansas with his beautiful wife, Robin, and their dog, Allie. Jackson spends his day watching baseball and football, shopping on Amazon.com, reading and writing, and fighting the good fight.

April Jones, CRRN
April is employed at James J. Peters VAMC in 2004 as a Registered Nurse. She received her certification in Rehabilitative Nursing in 2009. In 2010, April was promoted to the SCI/D Acute Intensive
Rehabilitation Coordinator and was instrumental in receiving two 3-year CARF accreditations. In 2011, April accepted the position of SCI Telemedicine Coordinator. She was involved in the pilot for the VAs Video to Home program as well as many other initiatives. She currently responsible for the coordination of the ALS Virtual Care program ensuring these patients and their caregivers can communicate with their care team through live secure video visits or secure email messaging.

**Kathleen Kaminski, MA, CCC-SLP, ATP**

Kathleen is a Speech-Language Pathologist at the Atlanta VA Healthcare System. She previously worked at the Emory ALS Center in Atlanta. Kathleen received her Bachelor of Arts in Communication with a concentration in Communication Disorders from North Carolina State University. She completed her Master of Arts in Speech-Language Pathology from The University of Georgia. Kathleen holds the Certificate of Clinical Competence from American Speech-Language-Hearing Association. She is a certified Assistive Technology Professional and subject matter expert in the fields of augmentative communication and neurogenic communication disorders in degenerative diseases; specializing in the MND population for approximately fifteen years.

**Melinda Kavanaugh, PhD, MSW, LCSW**

Melinda is an Associate Professor in the Helen Bader School of Social Welfare, University of Wisconsin – Milwaukee. Dr. Kavanaugh’s research focuses on young caregivers, caregiving skill development, social support, and family and youth education. Dr. Kavanaugh works with the ALS Association to develop evidence based supportive and education programs for young caregivers. Dr. Kavanaugh has presents nationally and internationally and collaborates with the South African MND Association to develop culturally relevant programming for families. Dr. Kavanaugh is a licensed clinical social worker with over 15 years social work experience with families living with neurological disorders.

**Shameem Kizar, BSc RD**

Shameem completed her undergraduate Nutrition & Food Science Degree at the University of Alberta & her dietetic internship at the Health Sciences Centre in Winnipeg, MB. Shameem is the outpatient RD for the Neurosciences Program at the University of Alberta Hospital and covers the ALS clinic, MS clinic, Neuromuscular Clinic and the Movement Disorders Program. Shameem has 17 years of experience in inpatient & outpatient care in the areas of medicine, surgery, neurology, GI, ICU, pulmonary, psychiatry & home nutrition support. She has worked at the ALS clinic for 12 years and values the interdisciplinary team approach to patient care. She has a passion for food & believes food is an integral part of health.

**Sherry N Kolodziejczak, MS, OTR/L**

Sherry graduated from Eastern Michigan University in 1983 with a BS in Occupational Therapy. She received her Master in Occupational Therapy from Boston University in 2006. Her thesis focused on exploring the effectiveness of Constraint Induced Therapy.
Her career began at William Beaumont Hospital followed by serving as the Vocational Services Coordinator at the Haggerty Center for Neurorehabilitation in Michigan. Now settled in Alabama, she was employed by HealthSouth Rehabilitation Hospital of North Alabama as Senior Occupational Therapist. Her areas of interest included Neuro-rehabilitation, low vision, Interactive Metronome, NDT and working with both Level I and Level II students. She is currently employed as Director of Therapy Services at Crestwood Medical Center in Huntsville, Alabama. Her areas of interest include Neuro-rehabilitation where she continues to offer expertise using services such as Saebo Arm Training Program, Interactive Metronome, Modality, Certification Low Vision and Seating and Mobility Evaluations.

She has been instrumental in the development of the ACE Unit and the ALS Care Clinic at Crestwood. The ALS Care Clinic has recently been awarded the distinction of Treatment Center for Excellence by the National ALS Association. Sherry is also the AARP State Coordinator for Driver’s Safety and is a Board Member for ALSA, Parkinson’s SGAL and MS Research. She is also a member of SALSA focusing on developing best practice guidelines for those evaluating and treating ALS. She also serves as an accreditation reviewer for AOTA. Sherry continues to speak and present workshops on Power Wheelchair Evaluation and Documentation, Saebo, Interactive Metronome, Stroke and Head Injury Rehabilitation, ALS and Parkinson’s adaption and treatment, HomeFit, DriverSafety, and Medicare Documentation Requirements.

Cynthia Knoche, RRT, BBA
Ms. Knoche, a Registered Respiratory Therapist with a Bachelor of Business Degree has worked in academic medical center and community hospitals providing emergency, intensive and diagnostic respiratory care since 1975. As Director of Respiratory Services with CareMax Medical Resources she provided direct clinical care to patients diagnosed with ALS in the homecare setting. Serving as Director-Chapter Care Services with The ALS Association Ms. Knoche provides educational and program support services to 41 ALS Association Chapters and Service Areas across the country.

Kyle Mamiya, MS, CCC-SLP
Kyle is a Speech-Language Pathologist at the VA in Seattle, WA. He completed his Master of Science in Speech-Language Pathology from California State University, Northridge. Kyle works in the outpatient and inpatient setting with patients with various cognitive communication and swallowing disorders, is a member of the Polytrauma System of Care team working with Veterans with acquired brain injuries and promotes telehealth as a Telehealth Master Preceptor for the Department of Veterans Affairs. He is a proud husband and father of three patient and busy kids.

Karen A Martin, MA, RDN, LD, FAND
Karen is the Dietitian for the Texas Chapter ALSA Clinic at UT Health San Antonio. She is a Fellow of the American Academy of Nutrition & Dietetics.
Karen, an RDN for 33 years, has conducted research and presented at state, national and international ALS, and American Society for Parenteral & Enteral Nutrition meetings and is published in textbooks and peer-reviewed journals. She authored the Nutrition Segment of the ALS Association’s Living with ALS publication and moderates the ALS Dietitian listserv and is on the Medicare Provider Outreach Education Advisory Board for Jurisdiction C.

Helen Mayer, RN
Helen has been a Patient Services Coordinator for the Greater New York Chapter since 2011. She is a registered nurse with 40 years’ experience, seven of them specifically working with people living with ALS. Helen opened the Hudson Valley Region and initiated services and programs to serve that community. Helen and can speak with experience in the area of expansion of services and access to programs.

Kendra McInturf, MS, CCC- SLP
Kendra served as the Assistive Technology Services Coordinator at The ALS Association Oregon and SW Washington Chapter from 2015 to 2017. In that role, she staffed multidisciplinary clinics at two Portland-area ALS Centers and offered communication support for people and families living with ALS. Support included provision of AAC/AT equipment and home visits to discuss communication changes and ALS, voice banking, quick access communication tools, speech-generating devices, computer and phone access, and more. Currently, Kendra specializes in AAC as a Home Health Speech Therapist alongside Trinity Deibert with Providence Health Systems.

Paul Mehta, MD
Dr. Mehta is a medical epidemiologist at the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR)/Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in Atlanta. He is the Principal Investigator for the United States congressionally-mandated National Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS) Registry and is responsible for providing medical, scientific, and epidemiological expertise on matters related to ALS.

Curtis Merring, OTR/L, MOT
Curtis received both his undergraduate psychology degree and Master in Occupational Therapy at the University of Pittsburgh. While at university he was involved in research on multiple studies dealing with psychosocial disorders, wheelchair seating, and neurological recovery of the upper extremity for stroke patients. As an occupational therapist and researcher for the past 9 years he was responsible for treating and investigating spinal cord injury and stroke. This included being awarded multiple small grants and coordinating research projects between the clinic and local universities. Curtis has also worked as a Director of Therapy Services in the geriatric setting including opening and managing rehabilitation departments at multiple locations. During his time as a director he developed a program
called “Seating System Management in Skilled Nursing Facilities and Long-Term Care”, that was a continuing education course he taught to facilities in both Texas and California. The goal of the course was to improve the seating systems of a very underserved population. Curtis is currently a clinical education manager for Permobil, who provides education and product support for Texas, Oklahoma, and Louisiana.

**Jon O. Nilsestuen, PhD, RRT, FAARC**
Dr. Nilsestuen has 36 years of experience teaching undergraduate and graduate respiratory care students at the Medical Branch. He is a Registered Respiratory Therapist. His education includes a Bachelors’ Degree in Mathematics from Franklin and Marshal College and a PhD in Pulmonary Physiology from the Medical College of Wisconsin.

He is currently the Director of Research for Respiratory Quality Services, a DME service company specializing in home ventilation and secretion management for neuromuscular patients. Dr. Nilsestuen’s major research activities and publications involve the use of ventilator graphics to improve patient-ventilator synchrony. Dr. Nilsestuen is the retired Chairman and University of Texas Medical Branch Professor Emeritus.

**Meghan O’Brien, MS, CCC-SLP**
Meghan is a speech-language pathologist in the Augmentative Communication Program and ALS Augmentative Communication Program at Boston Children’s Hospital. She is an adjunct instructor in the Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders at the MGH Institute of Health Professions. She is a former adjunct instructor in the SLP-Assistant program at Cerritos College. Meghan previously worked as the lead AAC consultant for the Los Angeles Unified School District.

**Martha I Palomino, PhD, RD, LD**
Dr. Palomino has been a clinical dietitian nutritionist with Regions Hospital and Health Partners for the past 4 years. She has experience in multiple areas of clinical nutrition including burns, cancer, orthopedics, and trauma. Dr. Palomino specializes on nutrition for neurological conditions like Alzheimer’s disease and ALS and has been part of the Health Partners ALS Clinic team since 2017. She combines her science background with her clinical skills to provide her patients with the best available nutrition therapy and education.

**Anne Peterson, MS, CTRS**
Anne is a Certified Therapeutic Recreation Specialist at VA Puget Sound. After obtaining her Master of Science in Therapeutic Recreation, followed by Recreation and Quality of Life consulting for skilled nursing and rehabilitation communities on the west coast, she now serves Veterans with ALS, MS, limb loss, traumatic brain injury, and stroke survivors in adaptive sports and recreation. Adaptive
opportunities include developing leisure activity skills for yoga, cycling, skiing, bowling, boccia ball, billiards, air guns, aquatics, therapeutic exercise, and training for national competitive events."

Brad Peterson

Brad is the Vice President of Professional Affairs and Clinical Education for Invacare Corporation. In over twenty-five years in the rehab industry Brad has worked as a clinician, provider, manufacturer’s representative and now, manufacturer. With nearly twenty years’ experience as a manufacturer Brad has worked for Quantum Rehab as well as Motion Concepts. Brad has lectured extensively throughout the United States and Canada at seminars and symposiums including RESNA, Medtrade, International Seating Symposium and the Canadian Seating and Mobility Conference. Brad has also been published in numerous trade publications during this time.

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Juliet Pierce, RN

Juliet has been a Care Services Specialist for The ALS Association Mid-America Chapter for 5 years. In addition to acting as one of the Clinic Liaisons at the ALS Treatment Center for Excellence of the Kansas University Health System, she also provides ALS services to healthcare professionals in the community. Before becoming a Registered Nurse in 1992, Juliet completed her undergraduate work in classical flute at Northwestern University and the Juilliard School of Music. As a nurse, Juliet has garnered multi-disciplinary expertise in emergency/trauma, operating room, critical care, and neurology nursing.

Jeri L. Prosser, BTPS, RRT

Jeri is a Care Service Coordinator for the ALS Association DC/MD/VA Chapter. Prior to working for the Association, Jeri was the Respiratory Therapist at the Sentara ALS Clinic in Virginia Beach, VA. She has worked as an RRT in both hospital and homecare settings. Jeri received her Associates degree in Respiratory Care from Frederick Community College, and her Bachelor of Technical and Professional Studies in Allied Health with concentration in Advanced Respiratory Care from Towson University. She has spoken at the Virginia Society of Respiratory Care Conference and MD/DC Respiratory Conference by the Sea.
Melissa A. Ramirez, PT, DPT, NCS, ATP
Melissa has been a Physical Therapy Neurology Clinical Specialist at the James J. Peters Veterans Affairs Medical Center since 2014. Melissa received her Doctor of Physical Therapy (DPT) degree from Columbia University in 2008 and began her career in neurological rehabilitation at Mount Sinai Medical Center working in both the acute care and inpatient rehabilitation settings. In 2011, Melissa became a certified Neurologic Clinical Specialist (NCS) and became instructor for the Columbia University DPT students as part of the spinal cord injury rehabilitation lab. She obtained her Assistive Technology Professional (ATP) certification in 2017.

Carmen Rivas, RN
Carmen is a Registered Nurse with over 16 years of clinical experience. Her clinical area of expertise is caring for patients that are Spinal cord injury, Multiple Sclerosis and ALS. Part of her roles and responsibilities are the management and oversight in coordination of care for the SCI, MS and ALS population. These have enabled her to enhance, improve and provide high quality level of care. She maintains personal and professional advancement by being credentialed as a Rehabilitation nurse. She continues to demonstrate a high level of competence and leadership which impacts client care organizational process/systems to improve outcomes.

Shayne Robinson, RD, CSO, CDN
Shayne is a Registered Dietitian. She recently joined the team at New York Presbyterian’s Columbia campus as the Clinical Dietitian/Nutritionist for the Eleanor and Lou Gehrig ALS Center. She comes most recently from the New York Presbyterian Weill Cornell campus.
After receiving her BS from the University of Maryland at College Park and dietetic internship through the NY Institute of Technology in 1997, Shayne spent over 10 years as a Dietitian at The Beth Israel and Saint Vincent’s Comprehensive Cancer Centers before coming to NY Presbyterian in 2013.
She is currently a representative to the House of Delegates of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics. She has served on the board of the Greater New York Dietetic Association, the Oncology Standards of Practice Committee of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics and has published multiple articles on nutrition. Shayne has dedicated her career to providing medical nutrition therapy to patients with advanced illness and to education of health professionals and the public on nutrition.

Laura Royal, MS, CCC-SLP
Laura received her B.S. in Business Administration from Auburn University in 1992 and her Master in Speech Pathology from the University of Alabama in 1996. She has been working at the University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB) Hospital since 1999 and has been serving patients with ALS since 2004. She is involved in UAB’s collaborative monthly ALS clinic where she works to provide swallowing and
communication assistance to promote safety and increased quality of life issues in the outpatient setting.

Sandra Schneider, PhD, CCC-SLP
Dr. Schneider is Professor (Emeritus) in Communicative Sciences and Disorders Department at Saint Mary’s College, an Adjunct Research Professor in the Department of Computer Science and Engineering at the University of Notre Dame, and Senior Clinical Director for SpeechLight.com. She completed a Post-Doctoral Fellowship in Medical Speech Pathology from Mayo Clinic and a Ph.D. from Northwestern University. Her areas of interest are adult neurogenic communication disorders where she maintains an active research agenda. Dr. Schneider is a member of the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA) and is a Board-Certified member of the Academy of Neurologic Communication Disorders and Sciences (ANCDS).

Tracy Shamas MSN, APRN
Tracy is a palliative care APRN and coordinator of the palliative care consultation team at VA Connecticut Healthcare System. She obtained her BSN and MSN from Fairfield University and maintains national certification in hospice & palliative care. She has over 25 years of experience working with veterans and has worked exclusively in the field of hospice & palliative care for over 10 years. Tracy has spent the last five years working directly with the VA Connecticut Interdisciplinary ALS Clinic in delivering palliative care to Veterans who carry this diagnosis.

Richard A Smith, MD
Dr. Smith, a neurologist, received his medical degree from the University of Miami and subsequently did his neurologic training at Stanford University, where he began his first studies of ALS, his principal career interest. Dr. Smith’s research contributed directly to the FDA’s approval of Nuedexta for treating emotional lability in ALS and kindred diseases. More recently, he has been involved in the development of antisense therapeutics for the treatment of Huntington’s disease and familial ALS.

Susan M Steves, RD, LDN
Susan is Registered Dietitian and has been working at the Duke ALS clinic for 14 years with Dr. Richard Bedlack. Susan has been a Registered Dietitian for 27 years.

Julie Stierwalt, PhD, CCC, SLP
Dr. Stierwalt is a Senior Associate Consultant in the Division of Speech Pathology, Department of Neurology at the Mayo Clinic. In this capacity she serves as a diagnostician for individuals with neurological speech, language, cognitive, and/or swallowing impairment. She maintains an active research agenda across these topic areas as well. She is a member of the American Speech, Language & Hearing Association (ASHA) and was awarded Fellow of ASHA in 2009.
Annette Stone, MA, CCC-SLP
Annette has experience with people of all ages and with a variety of diagnoses such as Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis, primary progressive aphasia, multiple sclerosis, Parkinson’s Disease, muscular dystrophy, spinal cord injury cerebral palsy, autism, and Down syndrome. Annette’s undergraduate major was in Spanish, which she currently uses today serving individuals who are bilingual and are in need of AAC.
Annette is a Senior Clinical Speech Pathologist in the Augmentative Communication Aids and Systems Clinic (CASC) at the Waisman Center in Madison, Wisconsin. She has 26 years of experience and currently specializes in augmentative and alternative communication (AAC).
Annette has also served as Practicum Supervisor and Clinical Fellowship Year Supervisor and guest lectures at the University of Wisconsin-Madison Occupational Therapy program, where she supervises and mentors occupational therapy students within an interdisciplinary team within the clinical setting.

Krista Strait-Higgins, MSW, LSW, ACSW
Krista has worked for The ALS Association Iowa Chapter since 2011. She received her Bachelor of Arts degree in Social Work from the University of Iowa in 1994, and her Master in Social Work from the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor in 1998. She has been providing collaborative medical social work care for patients and families with acute medical conditions since 1995.

Richard J. Strozewski, BA, PMP
Richard is a Telehealth Program Specialist/ Master Preceptor specializing in developing advances technologies, processes and systems specifically designed to meet the unique requirements of ALS patients. His qualifications include multiple certifications in advanced technologies, Telehealth, Healthcare Informatics, Project Management and Information System Process Engineering.
With Over 40 years background in the creation and deployment of information-based healthcare management, engineering and business solutions, his current direction is to leverage networks, advanced digital technologies and data assets to deliver useful clinical services effectively and efficiently directly to ALS patients in their home environments.

Anne Supplee, MDiv
Anne is a Care Services Coordinator at The ALS Association MN, ND, SD Chapter. She received her Master of Divinity from United Theological Seminary and has worked as a chaplain since 2007. Anne joined The ALS Association in 2008 and has an interest in mindfulness as a way of developing resiliency in care.

Kayla Brinkman Theimer, M.A., CCC/SLP
Kayla is a supervisor and speech-language pathologist at the HealthPartners Neuroscience Center. She has twelve years of experience as a speech-language pathologist, specializing in adult neurologic conditions of stroke, mild and moderate traumatic brain injury, dysphagia, and Parkinson’s disease. She joined the HealthPartners ALS Clinic team when it formed in 2017 and has enjoyed the learning and research opportunities the clinic offers as well as the unique and wonderful patients it serves.

Brian Timon BS, RRT
Brian obtained a BS in Respiratory Care from the University of TX Medical Branch in 1996. He has over 22 years of experience in the field including, hospital (direct patient care and management), homecare, education, and sales. Brian has participated in several published research abstracts and case studies and wrote a chapter in a Respiratory Care textbook on mechanical ventilation. At Respiratory Quality Services, we work very closely with the ALS Association in Texas and have been exclusively taking care of neuromuscular patients in the home for over 6 years.

Karen Toennis, RN, BSN
Karen has over 25 years of ALS experience. She was caregiver to her husband, who battled ALS for more than 13 years until he passed in July 2006. In 2007 she was asked by her husband’s ALS physician, Dr. Stanley Appel, to be the ALS Clinic Coordinator at Houston Methodist. As the ALS clinic coordinator her responsibilities include; organizing & managing the monthly ALS clinic, providing research assistance, educating patients & families about the ALS diagnosis, and coordinating the care & support of ALS patients and their families.

Martha R Van Dyken, MSW, LSW
Martha is a Licensed Master of Social who works at Spectrum Health Medical Group in Grand Rapids, Michigan. She works in the Department of Neurology with involvement in the ALS multidisciplinary clinic, Parkinson’s Disease multidisciplinary clinic, Neurocognitive Clinic and Brain and Spine Tumor Clinic. Martha also provides individual psychotherapy to patients within Neurology. She received her Bachelor in Social Work from Central Michigan University and her Master of Social Work from Michigan State University.

Jody Van Halsema, BSN, RN, SCRN, CNRN
Jody is the Nurse Coordinator for the ALS and Neuromuscular Multidisciplinary Clinic at Spectrum Health in Grand Rapids, Michigan. In addition, she coordinates a Parkinson’s disease Multidisciplinary Clinic. She received her BSN from Ferris State University and is currently working toward her MSN in nursing education. Jody holds certifications in stroke and neuroscience nursing through the American Association of Neuroscience Nurses.

Antoinette Verdone, ATP, MSBME
Antoinette is a Rehabilitation Engineer with eighteen years of experience providing assistive technology to people of various disabilities and is the owner of ImproveAbility, LLC, a private assistive technology consulting company based in Austin, TX. Before moving to Texas, Antoinette worked for the Greater New York Chapter of the ALS Association for five years where she was responsible for the Chapter’s equipment loan programs as well as providing assistive technology advice and service via home visits. She continues to serve PALS through ImproveAbility.

Sara N Villarreal, OTD, OTR/L
Sara Villarreal, OTD, OTR/L is a Senior Occupational Therapist with experience with evaluation and intervention services within the Communication Aids and Systems Clinic (CASC) at the Waisman Center in Madison, Wisconsin. She has 16 years of experience with individuals across the lifespan with a variety of diagnosis which include Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis, multiple sclerosis, Parkinson’s Disease, muscular dystrophy, spinal cord injury, cerebral palsy, and autism. Sara also guest lectures at the University of Wisconsin-Madison Occupational Therapy program and supervises and mentors occupational therapy students within an interdisciplinary team within the clinical setting.

Richard Warren, APRN, ACHPN
Rick obtained his bachelor’s and master’s degrees in nursing from the University of Portland. He is an adult nurse practitioner with a certification in hospice and palliative care. With over forty years of experience in health care his primary areas of focus have been respiratory care, oncology, ALS, hospice and palliative care. Since 2000, Rick has helped develop palliative care programs at Providence and currently provides outpatient palliative care services to patients with serious illness and their families.

Erin K Zahradnik, MD
Dr. Zahradnik is an Assistant Professor at the University of Chicago, where she is a palliative medicine physician in the ALSA-certified Center of Excellence ALS clinic. She graduated from the University of Kansas School of Medicine, did her residency at Yale, and fellowships at the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai. She is board-certified in Psychiatry, Geriatric Psychiatry, and Palliative Medicine. Her fellowship training in Palliative Medicine included a focus on patients with neurodegenerative diseases, primarily ALS and Huntington’s disease.