

Speaker and Moderator Biographies

Moderator

Brooks Robertson joined the Oral Health Kansas team as Executive Director in 2026, where he leads efforts to improve oral health statewide through advocacy, systems change, and coalition-building. Prior to Oral Health Kansas, Brooks worked in mental health and suicide prevention where he focused on education and training development, outreach and prevention strategies, and advocacy and coalition-building for utilizers of crisis services. Brooks is passionate about assuring accessible care for those traditionally underserved and serves on the Board of Directors for the Self Advocate Coalition of Kansas (SACK).

Dr. Melanie Simmer Beck is Interim Associate Dean for Academic Affairs, Chair of the Department of Dental Public Health and Behavioral Science, and a tenured Professor at the UMKC School of Dentistry. She has been teaching dental and dental hygiene students continuously since 2004. Her research focuses on improving access to oral health care and reducing oral health disparities, with particular interests in oral health workforce models and policy, implementation science, program evaluation, and quality assessment. Her interdisciplinary background in Oral and Craniofacial Sciences and Public Affairs and Administration informs her work in health services and implementation science research. Dr. Simmer-Beck is also Director of the Students in Training, in Academia, Health and Research (STAHR) Scholars-Dentistry program. She serves on the Oral Health Kansas Board of Directors and has held leadership roles with the organization.

Debra Meisenheimer retired from Blue Cross Blue Shield of Kansas, where she managed ongoing relations with professional health care providers regarding contracts, reimbursement, documentation, and education, as well as helping develop provider manuals and workshops. She's a member of Oral Health Kansas' Dental Champions Class 9, serves as Chair of the Conference Planning Committee and is a Board Member for Oral Health Kansas as Secretary.

Monica Turner is the Project Manager for the Pathways to Oral Health project. Prior to joining the OHK team, she worked in the dental field as a Practice Manager of an Endodontic office for over twenty years. She has a Bachelor of Science in Occupational Therapy and has worked in a variety of healthcare settings. She completed her Master of Health Administration at Wichita State University in December of 2024 and was

inspired to work toward improving access to care for underrepresented populations. Monica lives in Wichita with her husband and has three adult children. She enjoys the outdoors, reading, and working out.

Speakers

Oral Health Policy and Election Update
Building Your Advocacy Skills

- **Mallory Lutz,** BA, is a lobbyist with Little Government Relations, where she works directly with clients to develop policy priorities, coordinate legislative strategy, and build lasting relationships with policymakers. She also prepares legislative reports and policy presentations for the firm's clients. A Topeka native and summa cum laude graduate of Washburn University, she joined LGR in 2018 after serving as a park ranger at the Brown v. Board of Education National Historic Site. She is a 2021 Kansas Emerging Leaders graduate and a 2022 Topeka's Top 20 Under 40 honoree.

Enhancing Patient-Centered Care with the My Dental Care Passport & Sensory Modifications Guide

- **Billie Donohue**, CDA, CPC-A Billie Donohue is a dental professional at Rogers Family Dentistry in Arkansas City, Kansas, where she works alongside Dr. Paul "Nick" Rogers to provide quality dental care for patients across the lifespan, including those with complex medical needs. She is DANB certified and holds a CPC-A medical coding certification. Billie is also developing Smiles for Hope, Inc., a Kansas nonprofit that helps people in recovery from substance use disorders access cost-reduced dental care. She is committed to reducing barriers to oral health care.
- **Shelley Howard**, RDH, BS DH, MHSA, Shelley Howard is an Assistant Clinical Professor and the Director for External Rotations at the UMKC School of Dentistry, in the Dental Public Health and Behavioral Sciences department. She believes in oral health equity and accessibility, interprofessional practice, and in the importance of meeting and seeing people as they are. She is a Registered Dental Hygienist and holds a Bachelor's in Health Management and Community Development from Wichita State University and a Master's of Health Services Administration from KU School of Medicine.
- **MaryAnne Lynch Small**, MPH, BDS, is the Policy Manager at Oral Health Kansas. She graduated from the Mailman School of Public Health at Columbia University with a background in clinical dentistry and health advocacy. Upon graduating with a Bachelor of Dental Surgery degree (BDS) from Dundee University in her home country of Scotland, MaryAnne practiced as a primary care dentist for a period of over five years. Her time in clinical practice cemented her desire to expand her knowledge and skills in public health to drive for oral health equity among marginalized populations — an inequity highly evident in MaryAnne's place of work in Glasgow, Scotland.
- **Deb Pochop**, has served as CEO of Northwest Smile Center, formerly Rawlins County Dental Clinic, since December 2016. With more than 40 years of healthcare and management experience, including two years on the clinic's Board of Directors before becoming CEO, Deb brings a deep understanding of healthcare operations and strategic leadership. Under her guidance, Northwest Smile Center continues its mission of increasing access to quality, affordable oral healthcare for all residents of northwest Kansas, with a particular focus on serving rural and underserved communities.

- **Abby Richwine**, RDH, BS, is the Education Manager at Oral Health Kansas. Abby Richwine has been in the dental field for over ten years. Before accepting the Education Coordinator position at Oral Health Kansas, Abby was a Registered Dental Hygienist. She graduated from Concorde Career College in 2014 with an Associate in Dental Hygiene. After working clinically for a few years, she decided teaching was her passion and that furthering her education would be necessary. She returned to school and obtained a Bachelor of Science from Minnesota State University-Mankato. Shortly after graduation, she accepted a job teaching clinical hygiene at Concorde Career College. This sparked her interest in reaching out to her community, which led her to find her home at Oral Health Kansas.

Resilience, Well-Being, and Success in the Workplace

- **Rachael Gladden**, BA, Project Specialist with HOPE Services. Rachael is the Alcohol and Other Drugs Programs Project Specialist at Wichita State University. They have worked in the mental health field for 5 years and specialize in substance misuse prevention initiatives. They have worked in university settings as well as general community populations in Kansas

- **Rohan Sreevas Paramal Viswanathan**, BDS (Bachelor of Dental Surgery), MBA in Healthcare Management Student and Marketing Research Student Assistant at HOPE Services
  Rohan Sreevas Paramal Viswanathan, a dentist from India with a background in clinical practice and healthcare management. I'm currently pursuing my MBA in Healthcare at Wichita State University and working with HOPE Services. I'm passionate about healthcare, dentistry, and making a positive impact through the work I do.

Keynote Speaker

Shifting the Narrative: Amplifying Voices

- **Whit Downing** is the Vice President of Policy and Programming at the Kansas Council on Developmental Disabilities (KCDD), where she leads statewide initiatives on disability policy, behavioral health partnerships, systems change, and self-advocacy. An autistic self-advocate, she draws on lived experience navigating the disability and mental health systems, including eight years on the Kansas IDD waiver waitlist. She leads KCDD's Behavioral Health Workgroup, testifies before the Kansas Legislature, and founded "We All Matter," a mental health support group for teens and adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

AI in Dentistry

- **Tatiana Y. Lin, MA,** is the Director of Business Strategy and Innovation at the Kansas Health Institute, where she builds partnerships across public, private, and philanthropic sectors. With more than a decade of public health experience, she has advanced Health in All Policies, conducted Health Impact Assessments, and led research on issues including community water fluoridation. Nationally recognized for her work at the intersection of public health and artificial intelligence, she has delivered more than 100 AI workshops and received the 2025 Public Health Innovation Award from the National Network of Public Health Institutes.

The State of Dental Practice: Costs, Insurance, and Access

- **Deesha Bhaumik** is the Senior Health Policy Analyst at the Health Policy Institute (HPI) of the American Dental Association. At HPI, she leads both research and advocacy in dental policy, particularly in the areas of Medicaid, Medicare, and the Affordable Care Act. She is responsible for both quantitative and qualitative analysis and keeps HPI informed and up to date on new oral health policies issues. In addition, she leads the analysis and calculation of quality measures for the Dental Quality Alliance's State Oral Healthcare Quality Dashboard. Prior to joining HPI, she obtained her Ph.D. from the University of Michigan in Epidemiology