

SHM Converge 2026 Pro Panel Experts

March 30- 31, 2026

Need advice or feedback regarding career development, wellness and burnout, advocacy, POCUS, or have related questions?

Come ask the experts!



Kierstin Cates Kennedy, MD, MSHA, FACP, SFHM
University of Alabama at Birmingham

Kierstin Cates Kennedy, MD, MSHA is a Clinical Professor of Medicine at the University of Alabama at Birmingham and the Chief Medical and Quality Officer for UAB Hospital, a 1,207-bed quaternary hospital and academic health science center, and the 8th largest hospital in the US. Dr. Kennedy graduated from the UAB Heersink School of Medicine in 2007 and completed both her combined Internal Medicine-Pediatrics residency training and Executive Master of Science in Health Administration program at UAB in 2011. She is also fellowship trained in quality improvement via the VA Quality Scholars Fellowship which she completed in 2014. She has held numerous leadership roles in quality and operations, including medical director for the UAB Compliant Documentation Management Program, Director of Quality for Hospital Medicine, and Chief of Hospital Medicine with achievements in process redesign that have yielded sustained improvement in both quality and efficiency in care delivery. Dr. Kennedy is both course director and faculty for the SHM Leadership Academy and speaks nationally on leadership topics such as conflict resolution for leaders, emotional intelligence, building high performing teams and leveraging positive psychology to drive quality improvement. She is a past winner of the UAB Heersink School of Medicine Dean's Excellence Award for Service, the UAB Alumni Society Distinguished Alumni Award, the ACLGIM Unified Leadership Training in Diversity award, and the national Paul Batalden Award from the VA Quality Scholars program. She holds the designation of fellow with the American College of Physicians and senior fellow with the Society of Hospital Medicine.



Gwendolyn R. Williams, MD, FHM, FACP
Virginia Commonwealth University Health

Dr. Gwendolyn R. Williams is a Hospital Medicine Physician and Assistant Professor of Medicine at Virginia Commonwealth University Health. She is a nationally recognized leader and subject matter expert on clinician well-being. As President of the Society of Hospital Medicine Hampton Roads Chapter, immediate past Chair of the Sentara Medical Group Wellness & Engagement Committee, and Ambassador for the Dr. Lorna Breen Heroes' Foundation, Dr. Williams has championed advocacy and led initiatives focused on clinician well-being, burnout, moral injury, and mental-health awareness. Her work emphasizes the need for moral courage during times of uncertainty and the vital role of transformative leadership in shaping organizational culture. She underscores that belonging, inclusion, compassion, emotional intelligence, resilience—and investing in people and the front lines—are the true foundations of thriving healthcare teams. Dr. Williams is dedicated to helping clinicians reconnect with their purpose, restore meaning in medicine, and build lasting cultures rooted in care, compassion, and collective well-being.



Nilam J. Soni, MD, MS
University of Texas Health San Antonio

Dr. Soni is a professor of medicine and academic hospitalist at the University of Texas Health San Antonio and the South Texas Veterans Health Care System. He is a leader in point-of-care ultrasound, or POCUS and has led many POCUS initiatives for SHM since 2007, including establishment of the Point-of-care Ultrasound Advanced Learning Course in 2010. Through his leadership, the SHM POCUS community has expanded greatly, and now SHM has a POCUS Special Interest Group, Certificate of Completion Program, and several highly cited position statements in JHM. In 2025, he was awarded an SHM Award of Excellence for Outstanding Service in Hospital Medicine. He is also the visionary and chief editor of the book, Point-of-Care Ultrasound, which has >30,000 copies distributed around the world in 8 different languages. In his day-to-day job, Dr. Soni leads POCUS implementation for the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), has directed the VA's POCUS Patient Safety Center, and is currently leading a project to train rural clinicians in POCUS.



Jennifer Cowart, MD, SFHM, FACP
Mayo Clinic Rochester

Dr. Jennifer Cowart is a practicing hospitalist and Associate Professor of Medicine at Mayo Clinic Rochester. She served as Patient Safety Officer and as Chair of Quality for Mayo Clinic Florida prior to relocating to Minnesota, where she now serves as medical director of Inpatient Solutions for electronic health record development. Dr. Cowart developed her interest in advocacy and healthcare policy through study of quality improvement and healthcare systems, channeling this into multiple Hill Day visits to lawmakers at the local, state, and federal level to discuss patient and clinician needs. She has served on the Society of Hospital Medicine Public Policy Committee (PPC) for six years and this year is serving as committee chair.



Rachel Cyrus, MD, SFHM
Northwestern Memorial Hospital

Rachel Cyrus, MD, SFHM is an Associate Professor of Medicine at Northwestern University's Feinberg School of Medicine. She has been the Clinical Practice Director for the Division of Hospital Medicine at Northwestern since 2012. She currently serves as Associate Chief Medical Officer of Northwestern Memorial Hospital where she has worked on throughput initiatives including incorporating discharge nurses and a discharge lounge, development of a throughput expeditor role, and establishing a transfer back process. At the national level, Rachel has chaired and served on the Society of Hospital Medicine Practice Management Committee where throughput is a recurring theme.



William Small, MD, MBA
MCIT Department of Health Informatics, NYU Langone Health

William Small, MD, MBA, is a hospitalist and clinical informaticist. He partners with interdisciplinary teams to design, deploy, and study EMR/AI tools—especially large language models—that reduce clinician burden, improve operations, and enhance inpatient safety. His work spans homegrown tools (patient-friendly discharge instructions), vendor deployments (Epic's AI-Generated Hospital Course application), and hands-on education, including "prompt-a-thon" workshops on the responsible use of generative AI. He also co-directs the national NYU Transforming Hospital Medicine Conference, which showcases practical AI use-cases in U.S. hospitals.