

2024 Health & Medicine Award Winners

Health Award | Geeta Maker-Clark, MD

Dr. Geeta Maker-Clark is the Director of Integrative Nutrition and Advocacy at NorthShore University Health System and Clinical Assistant Professor and Co-Director of the Culinary Medicine program at the University of Chicago, Pritzker School of Medicine. Geeta has spent two decades studying integrative medicine, nutritional science, botanical medicine, mind-body medicine, and natural childbirth in health clinics all over the world. She started the Food is Power program on the South Side of Chicago in Chicago Public Schools to empower youth with health literacy through a curriculum that focuses on decolonized food education, food justice, and sovereignty.

Dr. Maker-Clark has consulted non-profits that work with formerly incarcerated people who are now trained chefs, helping accelerate a program for healthy meals distribution for food insecure communities affected by COVID. She also works with Apna Ghar, a South Asian domestic violence organization, to teach classes that feature culturally favored foods, and Urban Growers Collective, a Black- and women-led non-profit 11-acre farm in Chicago. In addition to reaching thousands through her food as medicine programs, she maintains a busy family medicine practice with Endeavor Health, focusing on uplifting community health using nutrition, food, botanicals, and mind-body medicine.

Geeta was recognized as a national leader in food justice activism with a Castanea Fellowship from 2019-2022 and the Mesa Refuge Michael Pollan Fellowship in Food Journalism in 2021. Looking to ancient wisdom and modern struggles as opportunities to heal with the medicines that are all around us, Geeta believes in transforming the way we think about medicine. As a woman of color, community organizer, integrative physician, and leader in the food as medicine movement, her work aims to help communities be well nourished—the heart of healing in our society and country.

Medicine Award | Juleigh Nowinski Konchak, MD

Juleigh Nowinski Konchak serves as an Addiction Medicine and Preventive Medicine physician at Cook County Health (CCH). She directs the Public Health/General Preventive Medicine Residency Program with CCH and Northwestern University—the only general preventive medicine residency in the state of Illinois. Juleigh provides oversight for CCH's substance use disorder (SUD) program with a focus on integrating SUD services into primary care, embedding peer recovery support and overdose prevention services, and enhancing care coordination for patients to optimize their physical, mental, and social health. She is the principal investigator on multiple grants from the Department of Justice focused on access to SUD care for individuals involved in the criminal legal system and addressing social and structural determinants of health.

Juleigh is an assistant professor in the Department of Preventive Medicine at Northwestern University's Feinberg School of Medicine. She completed a K12 Scholars program with the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality and Northwestern University, focusing on a regional learning health system approach to SUD care for those in the criminal-legal system, and is a member of the Illinois State Board of Health.

Prior to joining CCH, Juleigh served in public health positions in the U.S. Senate, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, and the Chicago Department of Public Health. She is grateful for the opportunity to work with incredible patients, colleagues, and collaborators, and is most proud of her roles as a mother of three, wife, daughter, sister, and friend.

Medicine Award | Peter H. S. Sporn, MD, ATSF, FCCP

The son of activist parents, Peter Sporn grew up in Detroit, Michigan. As a high school student, he became active in the movement against the war in Vietnam and the fight against racist police brutality. He continued his activism opposing war, racism, and economic injustice during his years in college and medical school. As a resident at Bronx Municipal Hospital/Albert Einstein, Peter co-organized a citywide strike demanding increased non-physician staffing and better conditions for patients in the New York City public hospital system. While training in pulmonary and critical care medicine at the University of Michigan, he was active in the student-led movement against apartheid in South Africa and joined Physicians for a National Health Plan.

Dr. Sporn joined the faculty at Northwestern University's Feinberg School of Medicine and the Jesse Brown VA Medical Center in 1991. Throughout his career, he has advocated for increased recruitment of individuals from historically marginalized and under-represented groups and has pushed for increased numbers of Black and Latinx students, residents, fellows, and faculty. As faculty advisor to Northwestern's Student National Medical Association, Northwestern Students for a National Health Plan, and member of Northwestern Street Medicine, he has supported numerous medical students of color and serves as mentor to the next generation of health justice physicians. During his more than 20 years directing Northwestern's Pulmonary and Critical Care Medicine Fellowship Program, he recruited multiple Black and Latinx physicians and increased the percentage of women trainees to over 50%. As a member of the Jesse Brown for Black Lives Task Force, Dr. Sporn has worked with colleagues to eliminate the unscientific use of race in clinical algorithms in the VA system, including race-based pulmonary function equations that normalize poor lung health in Black and other people of color.

Dr. Sporn specializes in sarcoidosis, a multi-system inflammatory disease that affects the lungs and other organs. Sarcoidosis is most common and severe among Black people in the U.S. but is understudied. Under Dr. Sporn's direction, the Northwestern Sarcoidosis Center of Excellence studies new treatments and works to eliminate disparities in sarcoidosis outcomes. Finally, Dr. Sporn has been a long been active in the movement for liberation of Palestine. He has done health work in Palestine, and is a founding member of the Jewish Voice for Peace Health Advisory Council, a network that researches, writes, and organizes against the Israeli Occupation and the war against Gaza with a health and human rights lens.

Policy Award | Sarah Hess, JD

Sarah Hess is a Senior Staff Attorney at Legal Council for Health Justice, an organization working with Illinois communities to overcome and dismantle barriers to the care and services they need to stay healthy, fed, and housed. Through medical-legal partnership (MLP), Sarah focuses on children with disabilities from low-income households and provides representation in special education, public benefits, and other related areas. She has helped design, build, manage, and staff MLPs at Erie Family Health Center, and UI Health's CHECK program.

Currently, Sarah provides services to the Social Work Department at a local children's hospital, where her services aim to mitigate the causes and consequences of trauma, toxic stress, and the social determinants of health. Sarah uses the MLP public health model to help medical partners recognize and address health-harming legal needs and refer families for legal assistance. Her policy efforts are guided by work with individual families and medical partners and include securing nutrition services for students with severe disabilities, improving home and hospital instruction provided by public school districts, and accessing public benefits for minors experiencing homelessness on their own.

Sarah represents the 2011-2015 Public Interest Law Initiative Intern Alumni and is a member of the Illinois ACEs Response Collaborative and the National Order of Scribes. She earned her J.D. from The John Marshall Law School, where she was awarded the Women's Bar Foundation Scholarship, Herzog and Edward T. Lee Scholarships, and Public Interest Recognition Award. Sarah was honored with the Kimball R. Anderson and Karen Gatsis Anderson Public Interest Law Fellowship in 2017.

Research Award | Arden Handler, DrPH

Dr. Arden Handler is Professor of Community Health Sciences and longtime Director of the Center of Excellence in Maternal and Child Health (MCH) at the University of Illinois at Chicago School of Public Health. Her research career reflects her long-standing commitment to reducing inequities and improving the health of women, pregnant and postpartum persons, children, and families. She has specifically explored the factors that increase the risk for inequities in adverse pregnancy outcomes and examined ways for the health care delivery system to improve these risks and reduce inequities. Her other research and teaching interests include maternal and child health advocacy and policy, building the analytic capacity of the MCH workforce through MCH epidemiology, and the structure and functioning of the public health delivery system.

Dr. Handler has a long history of conducting evaluations of public sector maternal and women's health programs to generate information for systems and policy change. She is the recent PI of the evaluation of the Illinois Breast and Cervical Cancer Program, PI of the evaluation of Family Connects Chicago, and Co-PI of the evaluation of OCEAN Healthy Start. Over the last decade, she has worked on multiple projects focused on the delivery of health care in the postpartum period. Since October 2019, she has been one of three PIs of the HRSA-funded Innovations to ImPROve Maternal Outcomes in Illinois (I PROMOTE-IL) and has co-led the Illinois Maternal Health Task Force. She was also co-I of Improving Maternal Health Through an Adaptation of a Two-Generation Postpartum Care Model in Diverse Settings and is Co-I of the University of Illinois Maternal Health Research Center of Excellence, a newly funded effort to support research, training, and community engagement to address maternal health inequities.

Dr. Handler is a nationally renowned leader in maternal and child health advocacy, policy, epidemiology, and public health system improvement, who served as a former member of the Secretary's Advisory Committee on Infant Mortality during the Obama Administration. In recognition of her many contributions to reducing inequities in maternal and infant health, she has received awards that include the Maternal and Child Health Bureau's 2021 Title V Lifetime Achievement Award and recognition as one of six 2021 University Scholars in the University of Illinois system.

Group Award | DuPage Health Coalition

Dedicated to cultivating a thriving community where all residents are healthy enough to work and care for their families, the DuPage Health Coalition (DHC) embraces its mission to open doors to efficient and effective health care for low-income DuPage County residents. Established in 2001 to ensure comprehensive healthcare for community residents who were uninsured, DHC's programs and planning mitigate barriers to access to care, centering on drivers of health and largely serving immigrants and people of color. Access DuPage, DHC's founding program, provides low-cost comprehensive healthcare for insurance-ineligible individuals and remains central to their efforts 23 years and 75,000 patients later.

DHC offers resources for health education, health literacy, insurance education, chronic disease management, financial fitness, and Mental Health First Aid. They have been a leader in expanding mental health access, improving resources for substance use recovery, and expanding avenues to vaccinations. In recent years, DHC introduced two innovative medical debt programs assisting thousands of residents, expanded its client benefitting team to ease Medicaid and ACA Marketplace enrollment, and launched Everyday Hero, a CPR/Narcan/AED Initiative countering historic inequities in access to life saving bystander CPR. During the pandemic, DHC partnerships facilitated rapid mobilization of health stakeholders, amplifying community efforts to combat health inequities that harmed vulnerable local families.

DHC embraces the opportunity to cocreate collaborative solutions to complex public health challenges and facilitate access to quality programming commonly inaccessible in other communities. They are driven by, committed to, and focused on measurable health improvement.

Group Award | Mobile Migrant Health Team

From May to December 2023, MMHT provided over 9,000 health assessments to new arrivals in Chicago police stations. Over 2,000 patients received free treatment via over-the-counter medications, prescription medications, and/or connections to vital follow-up care. In recent months, MMHT has supported city vaccination efforts within shelters, helped dozens of patients navigate our complex healthcare system, and established a pop-up clinic at the Pilsen Food Pantry.

Since its founding, MMHT has remained steadfast in its commitment to helping Chicago's newest residents. Guided by values of cultural competence, compassion, professionalism, and reliability, MMHT recognizes healthcare as a human right. MMHT has received generous support from the Coleman Foundation, the Chicago Community Trust Immigration Funders Collaborative, and many community donors and partners, including CommunityHealth Clinic, Hamdard Health Alliance, Pilsen Wellness Center, UIC Law Human Rights Clinic, Sirum, the Pilsen Food Pantry, and the Figueroa Wu Family Foundation.

The team is committed to advocating for migrants' well-being and addressing access gaps while promoting core values of respect, equity, trust, dignity, and a shared belief that everyone deserves quality healthcare and necessities regardless of their background or housing status.

Lifetime Achievement Award | Brenda Battle, MBA, BSN

Brenda Battle is an industry leader in health equity with a successful history of strategies resulting in incremental and systemic change toward improving the health and wellness of vulnerable populations. Brenda is a national speaker on health equity and health disparities, has several publications, and serves as Senior Vice President for Community Health Transformation and Chief Equity Officer for The University of Chicago Medicine (UCM) Health System.

Brenda designs and oversees UCM's community-health transformation and equity strategies; develops and implements coordinated, innovative healthcare, social, and economic solutions to address the social determinants of health and reduce inequities for communities and populations served by UCM; and fosters innovation in UCM's care delivery system by crafting care models and systems that promote diversity, equity, and inclusion. She also oversees the Urban Health Initiative (UHI), UCM's community health division focused on bridging the relationship between UCM and the communities it serves.

Prior to joining UCM, Brenda was the Founding Director of the Center for Diversity and Cultural Competence at Barnes-Jewish Hospital in St. Louis, MO, where she developed and implemented Barnes-Jewish Hospital's strategy for diversity, equity, inclusion, and community benefit.

Brenda has over 38 years of health care experience, serving as Executive Vice President, Government and Community Affairs for Medical Transportation Management (MTM), Inc., and leading operations in commercial and Medicaid managed care. She has served on local and national boards since 1997 and currently serves on the Board of Directors of the Red Cross of Chicago and Northern Illinois, Cara Collective, The South Side Health Community Organization, and America's Essential Hospitals Institute (Washington, D.C.). She is a Trustee at her church, Apostolic Faith Church, Chicago.

2024 Health & Medicine Awards Gala

September 12, 2024 | 6 - 9 p.m. | Ignite Glass Studios

**HEALTH &
MEDICINE**
POLICY RESEARCH GROUP

Emerging Leader Award | Kandis Draw, BA, CHW

Kandis Draw holds the role of Senior Community Health Worker (CHW) at The HAP Foundation, where she is responsible for the Chatham/Englewood region on the south side of Chicago. In this role, Kandis delivers free education on serious illness, encompassing themes of grief, caregiving, advance care planning, and disparate access, to the community. As a CHW innovator, she also promotes the leadership of CHW roles in community-engaged research.

Kandis recently served on the leadership team for a project in collaboration with NORC at the University of Chicago, focusing on the enhancement of understanding knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors concerning hospice and palliative care among Black individuals residing in Chicago. In 2022, Kandis received the American Public Health Association CHW Section Leader Award for her exemplary work in integrating CHW roles into research projects.

Since 2019, Kandis has served as a contributing writer for Caregiving.com, where she was nominated for a Caregiving Visionary Award in 2021. She has been featured on several podcasts. Her educational background includes a Bachelor of Arts degree in Psychology from Oakwood University. She currently holds a position on the Special Commission for Gynecological Cancers for the State of Illinois. Outside of her professional endeavors, Kandis enjoys wine, coffee, anything sparkly, and being "Auntie K" to her nieces and nephews.

Emerging Leader Award | Anthony D. Douglas II, MD

Dr. Douglas is a General Surgery Resident Physician at the University of Chicago. He was born and raised in South Bend, Indiana and graduated from South Bend Washington High School, Wabash College, and Indiana University School of Medicine. Committed to the care of traumatically injured patients and research in health equity and violence prevention, Dr. Douglas is passionate about addressing the socioeconomic and historical factors that cause trauma in urban communities.

At the University of Chicago, Anthony founded and completed the UChicago Surgical Advocacy Fellowship, a two-year fellowship providing early career surgeons with the tools to become fierce surgeon advocates. During this fellowship, he deliberated with lawmakers in Springfield and Washington D.C. on issues including prescription drug affordability, violence prevention, and Medicaid/Medicare reimbursement. Working intimately with Citizen Action Illinois, he has travelled to Springfield to sit with elected officials, participated in press conferences and interviews, and organized a press conference of physicians to implore the legislature to act on everyday people's ability to afford life-saving medications. He is currently working on a new model of corporate responsibility legislation for the firearms industry for the inevitable and predictable harm firearms cause.

Dr. Douglas has publications in both public and academic facing journals and has been featured in the Chicago Tribune and Sun Times. He recently received a Midwest Regional Emmy Award for his participation in "Behind the Mask," a short film highlighting the importance of diversity in health care. He has been recognized for excellence as an educator, earned membership in Phi Beta Kappa Honor Society and Alpha Omega Alpha Honor Medical Society, and received the UIC School of Public Health Director's Scholarship and Policy Practice and Prevention Research Center Scholarship. He was granted the Southland RISE violence prevention grant for his non-profit, Lil Scholars. He also directs and hosts "Deep Cuts," a podcast exploring equity and disparities in surgical care for patients on the South Side of Chicago.

Outside of work, Anthony enjoys food, family, and fellowship—in that order. At the conclusion of his residency and fellowship training, he will be a board-certified general surgeon, sub-specialized in trauma and acute care surgery.