

ASPR TRACIE Roundtable: Lessons Learned in Health Care Communications

Brief Speaker Biographies
April 20, 2023

Welcome

Rachel Lehman

Acting Director, Technical Resources, Assistance Center, and Information Exchange (TRACIE), U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), Administration for Strategic Preparedness and Response (ASPR)

Rachel Lehman is the Acting System Owner and Director for ASPR TRACIE. She previously she served as an analyst in ASPR's Division of Critical Infrastructure Protection where she led communications, helped manage the Healthcare and Public Health Sector Partnership, and worked on all-hazards risk assessment for the healthcare sector. Prior to joining ASPR, she supported the U.S. Environmental Protection Agencies Office of Research and Development working on chemical risk assessment.

Moderator

John Hick, MD

Hennepin Healthcare and ASPR TRACIE

Dr. Hick is a faculty emergency physician at Hennepin Healthcare and a Professor of Emergency Medicine at the University of Minnesota Medical School. He serves as the Associate Medical Director for Hennepin County Emergency Medical Services and Medical Director for Emergency Preparedness at Hennepin Healthcare. He served the Minnesota Department of Health as the Medical Director for the Office of Emergency Preparedness and from 2002-2014. He currently serves as the Senior Editor for ASPR's Technical Resources, Assistance Center, and Information Exchange. He is an expert on hospital preparedness and crisis medical care issues and has published over fifty peer-reviewed papers dealing with hospital preparedness for contaminated casualties, disaster standards of care, and surge capacity.

Panelists

Jennifer Askey

Portfolio Manager/Strategic Engagement and Change Management, Office of Healthcare Transformation, Veterans Health Administration

Jennifer Askey joined the Veterans Health Administration's (VHA) Office of Healthcare Transformation (OHT) in 2017 and now serves as the Portfolio Manager for Strategic Engagement and Change Management. Jennifer oversees high-priority projects across the administration and advises on crisis and strategic communications as well as organizational change.

As a VHA communications expert, Jennifer led COVID-19 crisis communications from the beginning of the pandemic until March 2023. During the COVID-19 crisis, she collaborated with three VA interagency administrations, multiple federal agencies and the White House to coordinate COVID-19 communications protocol, messaging and outreach guidance to all stakeholders.

Before moving into her present leadership role, she served in a variety of VHA and U.S. Army communication and leadership positions in the United States and Europe.

Amanda Burrage, MD, MPH

Medical Director of Public Health, Tuba City Regional Health Care Corporation (Arizona)

Amanda Burrage, MD, MPH, FAAP is the Medical Director of Public Health and a pediatrician at Tuba City Regional Health Care Corporation on the Navajo Nation in Tuba City, Arizona. Since arriving in Tuba City she has lead the creation of the Department of Public Health and has helped direct the Navajo Nation COVID response as a member of the Navajo Nation Health Command Operations Center. Prior to moving to the Navajo Nation, she worked at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention as an Epidemic Intelligence Service Officer as part of a 2-year disease outbreak investigation fellowship. While at the CDC, she was on the Global Maternal/Child HIV team and worked on projects in Botswana, Eswatini, and Tanzania. She also helped with the Zika response and a domestic HIV response. She completed residency at the Oregon Health and Science University, medical school at the University of Massachusetts and a Master's in Public Health at the Harvard School of Public Health. Prior to medical training, she received a B.A. from Bowdoin College and worked at Partners In Health in Boston, Massachusetts.

Syra Madad, DHSc, MCP

Senior Director, System-wide Special Pathogens Program, NYC Health + Hospitals

[Access Dr. Madad's bio here.](#)

Tami Wood, BSN, RN, RRC

Co-Owner, Healthcare Coalition Partners of Kansas, LLC; North Central Kansas HCC Response and Readiness Coordinator

[Access Ms. Wood's bio here.](#)

Additional Panelists

Danielle Martin, MPA, CHEP, RRC

Co-Owner, Healthcare Coalition Partners of Kansas, NE KS Healthcare Coalition Readiness and Response Coordinator

Ms. Marten has over 15 years' experience in budgeting and financial planning with 11 of those years working directly with contracts, grants and State of Kansas budgets. She has served as the Northeast Kansas Healthcare Coalition Regional Coordinator since 2016 and a Co-Owner of Healthcare Coalition Partners of KS since 2019. Her Master's in Public Administration has equipped Ms. Marten with the skillset necessary to work with all levels of Government. Ms. Marten serves as the project management Subject Matter Expert, Liaison and Public Information Officer for all KS Healthcare Coalitions. HCCP of KS' vision is to provide a unified approach to Healthcare Coalitions within the State of Kansas.

Melodee Mercer

Stakeholder Engagement Team, Office of Healthcare Transformation, Veterans Health Administration

Ms. Mercer has had an eclectic 40-year career at VA as training developer, teacher, process improvement facilitator, focus group moderator, video producer and communications director for several VA Central Office and Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Central Office programs.

Melodee's skills have been used across all three VA Administrations. Highlights of her VA career include developing and co-writing a nationally televised, award winning [PSA with Gary Sinise on Suicide Prevention, anchoring and field producing VA News On-Location, and several other VA](#)

[PSAs and training videos](#). Melodee's passion is plain language. She has trained over 7,200 employees in VBA's Reader-Focused Writing satellite course and adapted the course for several VA and VHA offices. She is a founding member of the Center for Plain Language and was detailed to IRS and several other government agencies to support their Plain Language programs. While working for the White House's National Partnership for Reinventing Government office, she wrote much of the letter-writing guidance for their [Plain Language website](#).

Melodee is currently the lead for the Strategic Engagement Team and was the Deputy during most of the COVID-19 pandemic. She used her skills to form a COVID Minority Outreach Communications Team and develop COVID products and videos tailored to underserved populations. Most recently, she led VA's Long COVID effort to include [fact sheets and videos](#).

Melodee performed for Veterans in USO shows from the age of 11, accumulating over 7,500 volunteer hours. She is on the board of the Philadelphia Vietnam Veterans Memorial and is currently producing [their virtual kiosk](#) videos.