



## **CHRONIC PAIN SYMPOSIUM:**

**INTERDISCIPLINARY AND HOLISTIC APPROACH TO ADDRESSING CHRONIC PAIN  
IN REFUGEE AND ASYLUM SEEKING CLIENTS**

*All service providers working with refugee and immigrant populations are welcome.*

**October 7th, 9am-1pm EST via Zoom  
Hosted by Nationalities Service Center**

**9:00-9:15 AM: Welcoming Remarks**

**9:15-9:30 AM: Client Stories-Living with Chronic Pain**

**9:30-10:30 AM: Keynote Speaker 1, Dr. Gunisha Kaur, M.D. M.A.**

Medical Director of the Weill Cornell Center for Human Rights, Director of the Anesthesiology Global Health Initiative, Program Director of Anesthesiology Global Health Fellowship Weill Cornell Medicine

**10:30-11:30 AM: Keynote Speaker 2, Dr. Amanda C de C Williams, PhD**

Professor of Clinical Health Psychology at University College London, Consultant Clinical Psychology at Pain Management Centre University College London Hospital, International Centre for Health and Human Rights, Section Editor for Psychology on Pain

**10:45-11:45 AM: Panel Session 1, Complementary and Alternative Approaches**

Vanessa Hazzard, Ellen Silver, Manuel Portillo, Gwen Soffer, Jenn Turner

**12:00-1:00 PM: Panel Session 2, Physical, Occupational, Clinical Therapy Approaches**

Natalia Alvarez-Figueroa, Rebecca Asch, Rebekka Dieterich-Hartwell, Stephen Kern, Chrissy Kubica, Todd O'Leary, Moumena Saradar

**Questions: Gwen Soffer, [gsoffer@nscphila.org](mailto:gsoffer@nscphila.org)**

**Register in advance for this free webinar:**

**[https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN\\_wiNfIkQQ-GrzRvXAHqtIg](https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_wiNfIkQQ-GrzRvXAHqtIg)**



**Dr. Gunisha Kaur, MD, MA**

**Dr. Gunisha Kaur** is an anesthesiologist specializing in human rights research. She serves as Medical Director of the Weill Cornell Center for Human Rights, Director of the Anesthesiology Global Health Initiative, and Program Director of the Anesthesiology Global Health Fellowship at Weill Cornell Medicine. Founded in 2010, WCCHR partners with Physicians for Human Rights to provide forensic medical evaluations to individuals seeking asylum in the United States. It is the first and largest student-run asylum clinic at a U.S. medical school. Dr. Kaur's research interests focus on displaced populations such as migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers. She has used her extensive training and research in neuroscience as an analytical framework to pioneer the study of human rights through scientific methodology. This has involved clinical research and clinical trials on issues such as chronic pain in torture survivors, mental health of children who are displaced, and trafficking of young women and girls in refugee camps. Her innovative research has been supported by competitive awards from the National Institutes of Health, the Foundation for Anesthesia Education and Research, and the Mario Einaudi Center for International Studies. In 2004, she published her first book, *Lost in History: 1984 Reconstructed*, which documents human rights violations in India, and in 2018 published an interactive, digital textbook, *Essentials of Global Health and Human Rights for Physicians*. A graduate of Cornell University and Weill Cornell Medical College, Dr. Kaur completed her anesthesiology residency at New York-Presbyterian/Weill Cornell Medicine in 2014. She earned an MA in medical anthropology from Harvard University in 2015. Website and publications: [www.gunishakaur.com](http://www.gunishakaur.com)

Kaur, G., Weinberg, R., Milewski, A. R., Huynh, S., Mauer, E., Hemmings, H. C., Jr., & Pryor, K. O. (2020). Chronic pain diagnosis in refugee torture survivors: A prospective, blinded diagnostic accuracy study. *PLoS Medicine*, 17(6), e1003108. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/32502219/>

Kaur G. (2017). Chronic pain in refugee torture survivors. *Journal of global health*, 7(2), 010303. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5804708/>



**Dr. Amanda C de C Williams, PhD**

**Dr. Amanda C de C Williams** is a Professor of Clinical Health Psychology at University College London and a consultant clinical psychologist at the Pain Management Centre, University College London Hospital, UK. She also works for the International Centre for Health and Human Rights and is Section Editor for Psychology on PAIN. As a clinician in an inpatient and outpatient pain management program, Dr. Williams carried out research and after obtaining her PhD in 1996, she moved increasingly into academic posts, joining University College London in 2004. She also worked in a torture survivor charity part-time. Her research interests include evidence-based medicine applied to psychologically informed interventions for pain; evolutionary perspectives on pain; behavioral expression of pain and its interpretation; better recognition and treatment of pain from torture; and responsive wearable technology to extend healthcare into patients' own environments. She has written over 300 papers and chapters on pain and psychology.

Website and other publications: [www.ucla.ac.uk/pals/people/amana-c-de-c-willams](http://www.ucla.ac.uk/pals/people/amana-c-de-c-willams).

Williams, A., & Amris, K. (2017). Treatment of persistent pain from torture: review and commentary. *Medicine, Conflict, and Survival*, 33(1), 60–81.

Williams, A. & Baird, E. (2016). Special considerations for the treatment of pain from torture and war. *Current Anesthesiology Reports*, 6, 319-326.



**Vanessa Hazzard,**  
**M.Ed., LMT**

**Vanessa Hazzard** is an author and a multi-nationally trained massage therapist. For 16 years, she's utilized eastern and western massage modalities to offer non-pharmaceutical pain relief to clients ages 8-90+. Her volunteerism and commitment to mental health and trauma-awareness in yoga and bodywork has landed her features on NPR, Philly.com, and university speaking engagements. Vanessa is author of *Prenatal Thai Massage: for Relaxation & Pain Relief* and co-editor of *The Color of Hope: People of Color Mental Health Narratives*. She has also been featured in the industry newspaper, *Massage Today*. Vanessa has served as an advisory board member for massage therapy programs, as well as Belmont Behavioral Health's mood disorder department. Vanessa blends her expertise as an allied health professional, with her background as an instructional designer. Currently, she is an eLearning Course Designer at Harvard Catalyst | The Harvard Clinical and Translational Science Center at Harvard Medical School. In their Postgraduate Education department, she designs continuing education courses for researchers through the lens of diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging. Vanessa has earned her Bachelor of Applied Science in Massage Therapy at Siena Heights University and Master of Education in Adult and Continuing Education from Rutgers University. Website: [www.scienceandsoulmassage.com](http://www.scienceandsoulmassage.com)

Hazzard, V. (2017). *Prenatal Thai Massage: For Relaxation and Pain Relief*. CreateSpace Publishing.

Hazzard, V. & Picot, I. (2015). *The Color of Hope: People of Color Mental Health Narratives*



**Manuel Portillo**

**Manuel Portillo** started in The Welcoming Center in 2014 as Director of the Immigrant Professionals Program to help unemployed and underemployed individuals to develop the skills necessary to access professional employment. He is currently the Director of Community Engagement working to develop participatory strategies to build trust and long-term relationships with participants and immigrant communities. He is a seasoned non-profit leader who comes to The Welcoming Center after a substantive career in non-profit program development. Manuel is a 25-year Philadelphia resident who is originally from Guatemala and is well-traveled and experienced working with people of diverse cultural and language backgrounds. He is a long-time professional organizer working to address local issues while building immigrant social and economic inclusion. He worked on developing The Welcoming Center's Participant Advisory Council and a consultative structure to strengthen listening inside the organizations and sound collective decision making. He is currently leading the design and implementation of the Immigrant Leadership Institute, a program offered by The Welcoming Center where he works on strategic civic participation, innovative approaches to civic engagement, and building inclusive partnerships and policies. He is currently a member of the Working Families Partnership, a project of AFL-CIO in Philadelphia. [www.welcomingcenter.org](http://www.welcomingcenter.org)



**Ellen Silver,**  
Lic. Ac. MA and SC,  
NCCAOM Diplomate

**Ellen Silver** was Director of Acupuncture Programs and Assistant Research Professor, Department of Family Medicine at Boston Medical Center and has over 30 years of experience as an acupuncturist. She is an Associate in Pediatrics at Harvard Medical School and Adjunct Professor at the New England School of Acupuncture. She was instrumental in the inception of four free-care clinics at Boston Medical Center and has worked on NIH-funded projects to evaluate the efficacy and safety of acupuncture in various populations. Website: [www.ellensilveracupuncture.com](http://www.ellensilveracupuncture.com), [www.researchgate.net/profile/Ellen-Highfield](http://www.researchgate.net/profile/Ellen-Highfield)

Silver-Highfield, E., Longacre, M. & Sager, A. (2014). A preliminary comparison of primary care use by refugees before and after acupuncture. *Journal of Complementary and Integrative Medicine*. 11(4):289-95

Longacre, M., Silver-Highfield, E., Lama, P. & Grodin, M. (2012). Complementary and alternative medicine in the treatment of refugees and survivors of torture: A review and proposal for action. *Torture: Quarterly Journal of Rehabilitation of Torture Victims and Prevention of Torture*, 22(1), 38-57.



**Gwen Soffer,**  
MSW, E-RYT, TCTSY-F

**Gwen Soffer** serves as Nationalities Service Center's Manager of Wellness Services and oversees onsite clinical and holistic trauma-informed wellness programming and staff professional development, including NSC's 30-hour Trauma Certificate program. She has been working in the trauma-informed wellness field for over fifteen years developing and implementing trauma-informed programming. She is a trauma-sensitive yoga facilitator certified through Center for Trauma and Embodiment at the Justice Resource Institute and Yoga Outreach and is registered as an experienced yoga teacher through Yoga Alliance. She developed and co-founded Teaching Public Yoga Classes through a Trauma-Informed Lens and Trauma-Sensitive Self Defense, and regularly presents on the topic of trauma-informed wellness practices including at the North American Refugee Health Conference, the Jefferson University Trauma Training Conference, and the Beau Biden Institute/SOAR Trauma Institute. Website: [nscphila.org](http://nscphila.org)

Kumar, G., Soffer, G., & Begg, D. (2021). Movement-based therapies for resettled refugee populations in the United States. *International Journal Yoga Therapy*.

Chapter contributor, *Moving in Authentic Relationship: Beyond Immigration to Healing and Connection* in Turner, J. (2020). *Embodied healing: Survivor and facilitator voices from practice of trauma-sensitive yoga*. Penguin Random House.



**Jenn Turner,**  
RYT, LMHC, TCTSY-F

**Jenn Turner** has had the honor of working with trauma throughout her entire career. In addition to working in private practice as a trauma-informed therapist, Jenn is the codirector of Trauma Center Trauma Sensitive Yoga (TCTSY) where she oversees training and supports the development of body-first interventions for healing from trauma. She delivered the intervention and developed protocol for the first-ever National Institute of Health study that examined the effects of yoga on treatment-resistant PTSD. Jen also leads TCTSY trainings throughout the United States, provides consultations to organizations on how to become more trauma-sensitive, and offers clinical supervision. In 2018, Jenn cofounded the Center for Trauma Embodiment. Most recently, she published *Embodied Healing: Survivor and Facilitator Voices from the Practice of Trauma-Sensitive Yoga*. [www.jenn-turner.com](http://www.jenn-turner.com)

Turner, J. (2020). *Embodied healing: Survivor and facilitator voices from practice of trauma-sensitive yoga*. Penguin Random House.

## Physical, Occupational, Clinical Therapy, Case Management Panel



**Natalia Alvarez-Figueroa,**  
MMT, MT-B

**Natalia Alvarez-Figueroa** is a Music Therapist at NSC. Afro Latina, born and raised in Puerto Rico, Natalia came to Philadelphia as an undergraduate transfer over 10 years ago. Natalia had a background in music education, before transitioning to music therapy. Natalia holds a master's degree in music therapy and is a board-certified music therapist working in the trauma field since 2012. Natalia has complete training in TF-CBT and is a bilingual (Spanish/English) professional. Natalia has conducted and presented qualitative research focusing on the importance of cultural humility when effectively working with individuals who have experienced trauma. Natalia has developed and teaches a six-week course for white aspiring allies, focusing on cognitive behavioral approaches to uncover and challenge biased automatic thoughts. Natalia facilitates trainings, consults and participates as a reviewer for ongoing research, assisting teachers, professors and institutions, within the intersections of topics mentioned above. [www.nschila.org](http://www.nschila.org) Moy, N. & Alvarez-Figueroa, A. (2021). Deconstructing the clinician: An auto-ethnographic study. Proquest online.



**Rebecca Asch,**  
MA, ATR-BC, LPC

**Rebecca Asch** is NSC's lead therapist, providing individual and group therapy. She co-developed and implemented a trauma informed, art therapy curriculum for clients of the Survivors of Torture Program. Previously, she served as the Assistant Director in a behavioral health hospital where she led a team of 30 therapists and educators. In addition to developing programming and supporting the implementation of evidenced based practices, she provided therapy to adults and children with depression, psychotic disorders, eating/body image concerns, bipolar disorder, trauma, and drug and alcohol use. [www.rebeccaasclpc.com](http://www.rebeccaasclpc.com)



**Rebekka Dieterich-Hartwell**  
PhD, BC-DMT, LPC

**Rebekka Dieterich-Hartwell** is an NSC dance/movement therapist and has over 16 years of clinical experience with adults with acute and chronic mental health, substance abuse, eating disorders and psychological trauma. Her research interests are in the areas of psychological trauma with a specific focus on the neurobiological effects of PTSD, in the connection between music and movement and the selection process of music for dance/movement therapy and in using dance and movement as a resource for refugees, asylees, and immigrants. Website: [www.nschila.org](http://www.nschila.org)

Dieterich-Hartwell, R., Haen, C., Kaimal, G., Koch, S., Villanueva, A., & Goodill, S. (2021). Developing movement experiences with refugees to the United States who have undergone trauma. *International Journal of Migration, Health, and Social Care*, 17(1), 75-91.

Dieterich-Hartwell, R., Goodill, S., & Koch, S. (2020). Dance/movement therapy with resettled refugees: A guideline and framework based on empirical data. *The Arts in Psychotherapy*, 101664.



**Stephen Kern,**  
PhD, OTR/L, FAOTA

**Dr. Stephen Kern** is an occupational therapy faculty member at Thomas Jefferson University. He is currently the director of the Master of Science Program on the Center City campus. His scholarship and clinical practice are focused on understanding the environmental support and barriers to people's ability to participate in meaningful daily activities (occupations). For the past 5 years he has been training occupational therapy students completing their fieldwork training at NSC. Currently, there is not a standardized assessment tool that does not require language skills. To have such a tool available, Dr. Kern is developing a non-language-based assessment of instrumental activities of daily living. Dr. Kern mentors doctoral students participating in this pursuit as part of their capstone project. Website and publications: [www.jefferson.edu/academics/colleges-schools-institutes/rehabilitation-sciences/departments/occupational-therapy/faculty/center-city/kern.html](http://www.jefferson.edu/academics/colleges-schools-institutes/rehabilitation-sciences/departments/occupational-therapy/faculty/center-city/kern.html)

Talero, P., Kern, S.B. & Tupé, D.A. (2015). Culturally responsive care in occupational therapy: An entry-level educational model embedded in service-learning *Scandinavian Journal of Occupational Therapy*, 22(2), 95-102.

Arenson, C., Umland, E., Collins, L., Kern, S.B., Hewston, L.A., Jerpbak, C., Antony, R., Rose, M. & Lyons, K. The health mentors program: Three years experience with longitudinal, patient-centered interprofessional education. *Journal of Interprofessional Care*, 29, (2), 138-143.





**Chrissy Kubica, LSW**

**Chrissy Kubica** serves as the Manager of Specialized Health Services at Nationalities Service Center where she coordinates newcomer healthcare and case management and occupational therapy supports for refugees and immigrants with extensive healthcare needs and developmental disabilities, as well as special program initiatives and projects. Prior to joining the INSPIRE team, Chrissy served as a case manager with the Philadelphia Partnership for Resilience and Refugee Resettlement teams at NSC. The courage, strength, and resilience of the clients that NSC works with motivates her to do this work. Prior to joining NSC, Chrissy worked in child welfare at Lutheran Children and Family Service interned for the Philadelphia Partnership for Resilience at NSC. In addition, she also spent time studying service delivery and conducting service learning of vulnerable populations in Romania where she gained a better understanding of hardships and barriers facing individuals living in a growing social service structure.

Chrissy is a Licensed Social Worker and earned her Masters in Social Work with an emphasis on International Social Work from Rutgers University and holds a BA in Psychology from Temple University



**Todd O'Leary, PTA**

**Todd O'Leary** is a physical therapist assistant at Thomas Jefferson University's outpatient PT department. His focus is working with chronic pain population, who often came to the clinic seeking relief from persistent and undiagnosed suffering. Utilizing pain neuroscience education in conjunction with more traditional modes of physical therapy, Todd utilizes a holistic and updated model that addresses the complexities of the nervous system.



**Moumena Saradar**

**Moumena Saradar**, originally from Syria, is a professional medical and mental health interpreter in Arabic, working with newly resettled immigrants for several interpreting agencies in Philadelphia. She serves as a mental health interpreter and Peer Liaison at Nationalities Service Center as well as co-facilitator of NSC's Mental Health Interpreter Training. In addition, she has translated their stories as a part of the recent Photo Voice project at Jefferson University. Her travels to several countries in Asia and Africa—and her experiences viewing popular Egyptian monuments motivated her to share her cultural understanding as a Global Guide at the Penn Museum. She holds an Associate's Degree in Laboratory Sciences from University of Damascus.



For 100 years, Nationalities Service Center has empowered immigrants to thrive in our communities and pursue a just future. Each year we serve over 5,000 immigrants including refugees, asylum seekers and survivors of crime, in the Greater Phila region and beyond. We provide comprehensive services and supports including legal protections and remedies, health and wellness, education and employment services and language access. Our mission is to welcome and empower immigrants to thrive in our communities and pursue a just future. Our vision is that all immigrants achieve a life of safety and stability, sustainable opportunities, and meaningful community connections.