

# Speaker Biographies - 2026 MAHCA Spring Symposium



## **Dr. Simon G. Talbot, MD**

Growing up and completing medical school in New Zealand, a passion for “fixing things” led him to pursue training in reconstructive plastic surgery at the Harvard Combined Plastic Surgery Residency. This led him to an academic career where he is one of the pioneers of some of the most complex reconstructive operations including leading an uncommon upper extremity transplantation program. Now an Associate Professor and Associate Chief of Plastic Surgery, Dr. Talbot has published more than 100 peer-reviewed papers, more than 30 chapters and lay-press articles, presented more than 120 local, national, and international lectures, and mentored countless students and surgical trainees. His research in the area of extremity trauma and transplantation has earned funding from the National Institutes of Health and United States Department of Defense. In 2018, he co-authored the landmark article Physicians Aren’t ‘Burning Out.’ They’re suffering from moral injury which introduced the concept of moral injury in healthcare into widespread discussion. Alongside psychiatrist Dr. Wendy Dean, he co-founded Moral Injury of Healthcare, a nonprofit devoted to reframing clinician distress from burnout alone toward structural and moral causes. At this Symposium, Dr. Talbot will reflect on what has transpired since the original article—how the concept of moral injury has evolved, how it has been operationalized, and the implications for healthcare systems, teams, and advocacy. His session will set the stage for the afternoon’s case-based and panel discussions, offering a bridge between theory, practitioner experience, and next-generation responses to moral/workplace injury in health care.

## **Dr. Sondra S. Crosby, MD, MPH**

Dr. Sondra Crosby is a Professor of Medicine and Public Health at the Boston University Schools of Medicine and Public Health, in the Center of Health Law, Ethics, and Human Rights. She has practiced refugee and immigrant health for over 25 years. As an internationally recognized expert in documentation of human rights violations, and on performing forensic medical evaluations utilizing the Istanbul Protocol in countries around the world, she is one of the few independent clinicians to evaluate prisoners at the Guantanamo Bay Detention Center. Dr. Crosby served as a drafter on the Istanbul Protocol Supplement (IPS) Project and has made significant contributions to the fields of torture documentation of and providing care to refugees and asylum seekers who have suffered human rights violations. Her scholarship and practice focus on the intersection of trauma, human rights, health inequities, and system-level responses to moral and structural injury in care contexts. She brings a deeply grounded lens on ethical care, especially in high-stakes or high-moral-conflict environments and will present a powerful case study to open the Symposium’s afternoon session.

## **Dianne Savastano**

Dianne Savastano, is Founder and Principal of Healthassist, a Massachusetts-based boutique consulting firm she launched in 2004 to help individuals and families confidently navigate the complexities of healthcare and insurance. A registered nurse by training, Dianne brings more than 30 years of experience across direct patient care, hospital leadership, insurance and employee benefits executive roles, and management consulting. This diverse background gives her a unique 360-degree perspective on healthcare decision-making and fuels her unwavering commitment to keeping the healthcare consumer at the center of every equation. In addition to her professional expertise, Dianne personally oversees the care of her aging parents, providing first-hand insight into the real-world challenges families face.

Dianne is a founding member of the National Association of Healthcare Advocates (NAHAC), where she served five years as Treasurer on the Board of Directors and currently serves on its Advisory Board. She is also a founding member and Treasurer of Massachusetts Healthcare Advocates (MAHCA), the first regional group affiliated with NAHAC, and was among the first members of The Alliance of Professional Health Advocates. In addition, she serves as a Springboard Member for HealthAdvocateX and is a Board-Certified Patient Advocate.

Dianne earned her BS in Nursing from Rhode Island College and her MBA from Simmons University.

### **Gary A. Cohen, JD, MPH**

Gary Cohen is a corporate bioethicist, attorney and intellectual-property strategist with 35+ years of experience in technology, life-sciences and early-stage ventures. He is co-founder of Humatics, and previously served as its president. Prior to Humatics, Gary held senior positions at leading organizations including Genetics Institute, Genzyme Transgenics, Millennium Pharmaceuticals and Foundation Medicine. He holds an AB from Washington University in St. Louis, a JD from Columbia Law School, and an MPH from Boston University School of Public Health. Gary presently serves on the National Council for the Washington University in St. Louis School of Public Health. At our Symposium panel discussion, Gary will bring his extensive legal, ethical and strategic lens to the conversation on moral distress, healthcare systems transformation and hope-driven change.

### **Lea Christo, MSW, LICSW, BCPA (Moderator)**

Lea Christo, MSW, LICSW, BCPA, is an Associate Professor of Practice in the School Counseling Program at the School of Graduate Studies. She formally directed the Health Advocacy Program at Assumption University and co-developed the curriculum options in healthcare management at the undergraduate and graduate levels. She currently serves as a member of Assumption's Veterans Success Committee and remains an active board member of the National Patient Advocacy Certification Board. Ms. Christo has worked at The Massachusetts Department of Social Services, McLean Hospital, The University of Massachusetts Medical Center, Friendly House, Inc., and The Holy Trinity Eastern Orthodox Nursing and Rehabilitation Center. Ms. Christo received her Master of Social Work degree from Boston College and has completed intensive training as a teacher of Mindful Self-Compassion through the University of California, San Diego, School of Medicine.