Cynthia Bens
Alliance for Aging Research

Cynthia Bens is the Vice President of Public Policy at the not-for-profit Alliance for Aging Research in Washington, D.C. In this capacity, Ms. Bens is responsible for guiding the organization’s federal policy work, representing the Alliance in multiple national coalitions, and directing all aspects of the Accelerate Cure/Treatments for Alzheimer’s Disease (ACT-AD) and Aging in Motion (AIM) coalitions. Ms. Bens sits on the Alliance for a Stronger FDA Board of Directors and is a Founding Executive Committee Member of Friends of the National Institute on Aging (FoNIA). She has served on the Steering Committee of the Partnership to Improve Patient Care (PIPC) since 2008 and is the sole patient adviser to the FDA Subcommittee of BIOCOM, the largest regional life science association in the world.

For the past 12 years Ms. Bens has worked to inform federal policymakers and educate the public on a variety of issues. For more than half of that time her efforts have centered on the formulation of policies to expedite the development of interventions to treat and prevent many debilitating age-related disease; to remove access barriers to needed treatments and therapies; and to improve the coordination and quality of care seniors receive. Since 2010, Ms. Bens has been the only patient stakeholder from the aging community consistently advocating before the U.S. Food and Drug Administration and the U.S. Congress for enhancements to the FDA’s user fee programs that would improve the development of treatments and medical devices intended for use by people 65 and older. Ms. Bens has also led advocacy efforts to elevate the profile of basic research into aging funded by all institutes and centers (ICs) at the National Institutes of Health (NIH). This advocacy led to the creation of a trans-NIH Geroscience Interest Group (GSIG) comprised of more than 20 NIH ICs.

Prior to joining the Alliance in 2006, Ms. Bens was a senior manager of government affairs with the Loeffler Group. As part of its federal government affairs practice, she represented diverse client interests before the U.S. Congress and the administration. Her core areas of focus included appropriations, budget, health care, education, telecommunications, and international trade. Through various other positions on Capitol Hill and in the private sector, she has acquired extensive experience researching and analyzing federal legislation and regulations. Ms. Bens holds a Bachelors of Arts degree from New York University with concentrations in Political Science and Women’s Studies.
Robin Boineau
National Heart Lung and Blood Institute

Robin Boineau, MD, MA is a cardiologist and exercise physiologist who joined NHLBI in 1996. Her undergraduate degree is from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill with a double major in Zoology and Physical Education. Her Master's Degree is in Exercise Physiology from the University of Georgia, Athens. Prior to attending medical school she worked at Duke University Medical Center where she developed the DASI (the Duke Activity Status Index). Dr. Boineau attended the Medical College of Georgia and while there did basic cardiovascular physiology and pharmacology research. She completed her internship and residency training at Miriam Hospital, a Brown University affiliate. She completed her medical training at Duke University Medical Center with a cardiology fellowship where her research focused on preventive cardiology and noninvasive assessment of cardiac risk.

Since coming to NIH and NHLBI, Dr. Boineau has worked in the Division of Epidemiology and Clinical Applications in both Epidemiology and Clinical Trial Division and currently in the Division of Cardiovascular Sciences (DCVS). She was the project officer for the Cardiovascular Health Study and the deputy project officer for the Multiethnic Study of Atherosclerosis (MESA) during its development phase. Since the NHLBI reorganization she has worked in the Heart Failure and Arrhythmias branch and is the project officer for the TOPCAT trial.

Elizabeth Brennan
WomenHeart

Elizabeth Brennan is a 69 year old retired RN. She was diagnosed with AFib in 2004, after she was sent to the emergency room and her normal rhythm had to be restored through IV medication. Subsequently, Ms. Brennan was able to identify increased episodes of AFib, but they were not evident on her Electrocardiograms or after several attempts using Holter Monitors. A 21-day monitoring period eventually revealed intermittent episodes of AFib. After seeing several cardiologists and receiving inconsistent diagnoses and treatment options, she was put on Coumadin, now Warfarin, to combat the risk of stroke. In 2010, she had an Angioplasty to treat coronary artery disease.

Sometime later, while she was giving a lecture on Stress Management (a frequent duty in her active professional career), Elizabeth met a WomenHeart Champion, who invited her to give a similar talk to the WomenHeart support group. The exposure to WomenHeart: The National Coalition for Women with Heart Disease, piqued her interest in a program focused on education and support for women with heart disease. She became a WomenHeart Champion in 2014 and is a co-leader at the WomenHeart peer support group in Huntington, NY. Elizabeth is committed to community education and strongly encourages all women to become self-advocates with their health care providers.
Lindsay Clarke  
Alliance for Aging Research

Lindsay Clarke is the Vice President of Health Programs at the not-for-profit Alliance for Aging Research. In this role, Ms. Clarke oversees the creation, production, dissemination, and marketing of the Alliance’s health education materials. She has overseen programs on stroke prevention in atrial fibrillation, valve disease, and other cardiovascular diseases; vision loss, Alzheimer's disease; sepsis; osteoporosis; and many other diseases and conditions of aging. These programs have included a vast array of resources including pocket films, brochures, quizzes, web materials, social media outreach, podcasts, health care professional guides, and more.

Additionally, Lindsay also oversees the production of *The Silver Book* series, an “almanac” of thousands of facts, statistics, graphs, and data from hundreds of agencies, organizations, and experts. *The Silver Book* series is made up of printed resources as well as an on-line, searchable database that has become a trusted resource for policymakers and thought leaders looking for the latest information on the burden of chronic diseases that disproportionately impact older Americans, and the value of investing in medical research.

Lindsay also represents the Alliance in a number of coalitions and at various meetings, and is closely involved in the development, strategic planning, and execution of the Alliance’s missions and goals.

Before joining the Alliance nine years ago, Lindsay was the Director of Institutional Projects at Chicago-Kent College of Law, her alma mater, where she oversaw projects related to the institutional progress of the school, conducted extensive research and legal analysis, and produced key reports and proposals. Lindsay earned her Juris Doctor degree from Chicago-Kent and a Bachelor of Science degree from the University of Michigan, with a concentration in Biology. Before attending law school, Lindsay worked in a radiation oncology lab studying the RNA of radiated cells prone to fibrosis.

Mary George  
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Mary George, MD, MSPH, FACS is the senior Medical Officer for the Division for Heart Disease and Stroke Prevention (DHDSP) at the CDC. She is the Division’s lead for quality improvement and represents the Division with several cardiovascular disease clinically related projects and national organizations. Her interests are in quality improvement, and health services research and clinical preventive services for stroke and cardiovascular disease. She has had experience in developing National Quality Forum (NQF)-endorsed clinical quality measures, has served on several quality measure technical expert and advisory panels, and was co-chair of the previous NQF Steering Committee for Cardiovascular performance measures.

At the CDC since 2006, Dr. George oversees the Paul Coverdell National Acute Stroke Registry and represents DHDSP at the AHA/ASA Stroke Leadership Council, the Stroke Belt
Consortium, and the Brain Attack Coalition, and has represented CDC in the development of the Stroke Consensus Performance Measures. Mary obtained her medical degree from Oregon Health & Science University, completed residencies in general and vascular surgery and plastic and reconstructive surgery at the University of Rochester, obtained a Masters in Public Health Informatics from Emory University and is a board certified surgeon & Fellow of the American College of Surgeons.

**Alan Jacobson**  
**Loma Linda VA Medical Center**

Alan K. Jacobson, M.D., is a staff cardiologist and the Associate Chief of Staff for Research at the Loma Linda VA Medical Center in Southern California. A native of Canada, Dr. Jacobson has been at Loma Linda since heading south in 1977 for medical school. In addition to practicing general cardiology, Dr. Jacobson has a special interest in antithrombotic therapy. He has been the medical director of the Cardiology Anticoagulation Clinic since 1990 and has overseen the initiation of both Point-of-Care testing and Patient self-testing for the monitoring of the prothrombin time. Dr. Jacobson has also been active in research relating to standardization of laboratory methods for PT determinations, clinical use of antithrombotic therapy in atrial fibrillation, evaluation of novel antithrombotic therapies and development of anticoagulant monitoring methodologies.

**Elizabeth Kato**  
**Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality**

Dr. Kato is a Medical Officer at the Center for Evidence and Practice Improvement (CEPI) at the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ). She received her Bachelor of Arts in political science/Asian studies and a Master of Regional Planning from Cornell University. After working in relief and development in Asia, she returned to the US to complete a medical degree at the University of Maryland. Since then, she has pursued an interest in health technology assessment, first as Senior Medical Research Analyst with Hayes Inc., and currently in her position as a medical officer with AHRQ.

**Ilisa Halpern Paul**  
**Drinker Biddle & Reath**

Ilisa Halpern Paul leads the District Policy Group and has more than 20 years of experience in government relations, advocacy, and policymaking in non-profit, academic, federally-funded, and government settings. Ilisa’s practice centers on advising clients with respect to advancing their federal legislative, regulatory and programmatic policy agendas.

Ilisa works to create innovative messaging, tactics, and materials in support of her clients’ policy goals. She helps her clients by bringing traditional and nontraditional partners to the table in support of common goals, fostering relationships with members of Congress and their staff, and collaborating with the administration and federal agencies. Ilisa frequently speaks at meetings and briefings providing political insight and analysis to help clients navigate the current policy environment.
Ilisa previously served as director of federal government relations for the American Cancer Society and as director of federal affairs with the American Public Health Association. Ilisa worked on the legislative staff for U.S. Senator Dianne Feinstein (D-CA). She earned a bachelor’s degree in English at UCLA and a master’s of public policy degree from Georgetown University’s Public Policy Institute.

Sue Peschin  
Alliance for Aging Research

Sue Peschin, MHS, is president and CEO at the Alliance for Aging Research. As the leader of the Executive Team, she is responsible for successful execution of the current strategic plan, and for assuring the operational excellence, fiscal health and growth of the organization.

Sue has more than 20 years of experience in health policy, government relations and non-profit leadership. Prior to her current role, she was vice president of Public Policy for the Alzheimer’s Foundation of America (AFA), where she successfully advocated for passage of health reform provisions for individuals with dementia and family caregivers, including the “detection of any cognitive impairment” provision in the new annual Medicare wellness visit, nursing home transparency and the Independence at Home Act demonstration program.

While at AFA, Sue also achieved a doubling of appropriations for the Missing Alzheimer’s Disease Patient Alert Program, co-facilitated the Leaders Engaged in Alzheimer’s Disease coalition, and served as an advisor on the “Caregiver Initiative” included in the 2010 annual report for the Middle Class Task Force, chaired by Vice President Joe Biden. She has published studies on cognitive screening, federal funding at the National Institute on Aging and policy recommendations for implementation of the National Alzheimer’s Project Act.

Previous to her work at AFA, Sue ran her own consulting business, offering lobby day training and strategic planning services. She also worked for more than 10 years in firearms violence prevention at the Violence Policy Center and Consumer Federation of America, and she continues as a Board member of CeaseFire Maryland. She also currently serves as a Board member for the American Aging Association, as a Steering Committee member for the Coalition for Imaging & Bioengineering Research, and as a member of the Expert Panel on Respite Research convened by the Lifespan Respite TA Center at the ARCH National Respite Network and Resource Center in collaboration with the Administration for Community Living/Administration on Aging.

Sue earned a B.A. in Sociology from Brandeis University and an M.H.S. degree in Health Policy from the Johns Hopkins University Bloomberg School of Public Health.
Ellis Unger  
U.S. Food and Drug Administration

Ellis Unger, MD, is the Acting Director of the Office of Drug Evaluation I in the Center for Drug Evaluation and Research (CDER) at the U.S. Food and Drug Administration. Formerly, he was Acting Deputy Director of CDER’s Office of Surveillance and Epidemiology (OSE). He obtained his medical degree from the University of Cincinnati, and received postdoctoral training at the Medical College of Virginia (internal medicine) and The Johns Hopkins Hospital (clinical cardiology). Dr. Unger was a Senior Investigator in the Cardiology Branch of NIH’s National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute from 1983 to 1997, where he directed a research program in angiogenesis, developing new approaches for the treatment of coronary artery disease and peripheral vascular disease. From 1997 to 2003, he served as Medical Officer, Team Leader, and subsequently Branch Chief in the Office of Therapeutics Research and Review (OTRR) in the FDA’s Center for Biologics Evaluation and Research. In 2003, Dr. Unger assumed the responsibilities of Deputy Director, Division of Cardiovascular and Renal Products, in CDER. He served as FDA representative to the Council for International Organizations of Medical Sciences (CIOMS) Working Group VII, and presently represents the agency on the International Conference on Harmonization Expert Working Group on the group of genes known as E2F, the Development Safety Update Report. Dr. Unger has authored, co-authored, and edited numerous scientific articles and is a co-holder of two patents.

Paul Varosy  
Veterans Administration

Paul Varosy, MD is the director of electrophysiology at the Denver Veterans Administration Medical Center and is also on staff at the University of Colorado Hospital. Dr. Varosy completed his clinical and research training at University of California San Francisco where he continued on as faculty before coming to Colorado. Dr. Varosy is involved with national programs evaluating arrhythmia management quality. His research focuses on outcomes related to electrophysiology procedures.

Salina Waddy  
National Institute on Neurological Disorders and Stroke

Dr. Salina Waddy is a stroke neurologist who completed her medical doctorate at Columbia University, followed by neurology residency training, a stroke fellowship, and a neuro-genetics post-doctoral fellowship at Emory University. She was an Assistant Professor at Emory prior to beginning her current position as Health Disparities Program Director in the Office of Clinical Research. Her areas of interest are health disparities, issues related to stroke and the genetic determinants of stroke, as well as predictive health.
Susan Zieman  
National Institute on Aging

Susan Zieman, M.D., Ph.D. joined the Division of Geriatrics and Clinical Gerontology as a Medical Officer in the Geriatrics Branch. Dr. Zieman comes to the NIA from Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine where she was Assistant Professor of Medicine in the Divisions of Cardiology and Geriatrics. Her interests in the Geriatrics Branch at NIA are focused on organ-specific diseases of older adults including cardiovascular, renal, pulmonary and gastroenterology in addition to promoting aging and geriatric-focused research amongst medical and surgical specialists.

Dr. Zieman attained a B.A. degree in biology from Cornell University in Biology and her M.D. degree at the University of Connecticut, School of Medicine. Thereafter, she completed her training in Internal Medicine, Cardiology and Geriatric Medicine at Johns Hopkins Hospital and is Board Certified in all three disciplines. She received her PhD from the Johns Hopkins School of Public Health in Clinical Investigation. At Johns Hopkins, Dr. Zieman ran a unique geriatric cardiology clinical practice and lectured locally, nationally and internationally on the impacts of aging on the cardiovascular system, cardiovascular syndromes, medications and specific care practices in older adults. She was the principal investigator on a John A. Hartford funded grant to develop and implement a national curriculum in geriatric cardiology for cardiology fellows in partnership with the American College of Cardiology. Her interest in developing curricula to educate medical and surgical specialists in geriatrics and aging research continues in her work at NIA. She carries leadership roles in the formation of new geriatrics focused sections in the American College of Cardiology and the American Heart Association and is a T. Franklin Williams Scholar Alumnae.