

Humans of CDI

Featuring William Curry, MD

Chief Medical Officer of the Massachusetts General Hospital and the Massachusetts General Physicians' Organization

Co-Director, Mass General Neuroscience

Director of Neurosurgical Oncology

Adeline Rose Wydotis Professor of Neurosurgery, Harvard Medical School



William Curry, MD is the Adeline Rose Wydotis Professor of Neurosurgery at Harvard Medical School and the Chief Medical Officer of the Massachusetts General Hospital and the Massachusetts General Physicians' Organization. He is a practicing neurosurgeon, specializing in neuro-oncology and skull base surgery. Throughout his career, he has been a translational researcher, focusing on bench-to-bedside pathways for development of novel approaches to brain cancer treatment, particularly in the fields of cell and gene therapy.

Dr. Curry graduated from Cornell University Medical College in 1997, after which he trained in Neurosurgery at Massachusetts General Hospital. He joined the Mass General Neurosurgery faculty in 2004. He has held multiple disease and specialty leadership positions, including being the Director of Neurosurgical Education, the Director of Neurosurgical Oncology, the Director of the Translational Brain Tumor Immunotherapy Laboratory, and Co-Director of Mass General Neuroscience. Dr. Curry believes in collaborative and integrated approaches for best clinical care and in the power of team science for clinical and translational innovation.

Dr. Curry is also a 2006 [Physician-Scientist Development Award \(PSDA\)](#) recipient.

Learn more about the role CDI has played in his journey, and so much more, in this month's Humans of CDI below.

What change have you witnessed and what's left to be done?

Since I arrived here in 1997, I have witnessed enormous change. I have witnessed change in the last 10 years, and in the last 2. We clearly have much left to accomplish in the realms of diversity, equity, and inclusion, but, in 1997, there was outright hostility toward these values. MGH has always had a strong sense of meritocracy, but, at that time, the definition of merit may have been a bit narrow. I was lucky enough to have attended the right schools and found the right mentors that made my candidacy for residency viable. Over time and through the efforts of leaders who built the Center for Diversity and Inclusion and the support of hospital and department leaders who have prioritized MGH's responsibility to the entire regional patient community, our orientation has been shifting, and that has included valuing diversity in our workforce. We've seen that accelerate over the past several years, even before the murder of George Floyd. To be effective providers of care, of course, our workforce and leadership needs to reflect our communities, and we are working on that.

I look forward to continued improvement on our work environment, to the recruitment and retention of increasing numbers of diverse faculty, and to the organic inclusion of the "equity lens" into every hospital strategic and tactical discussion and action.

What would it take to achieve equity and/or a truly equitable workforce at MGH?

We have all learned the modern definition of equity, and achieving true equity can feel daunting. How does one institution achieve equity when we are seemingly dependent on global social and political forces? We can break this work in to manageable pieces with concrete objectives. Workforce diversity has actually become underrated in society as a central step forward. No training is as good as working day in and day out with diverse peers. When we experience

the talents and perspectives of those that are not “like us”, we appreciate our common purpose. Of course, we must pave the way for each member of the MGH community to feel safe and to be their best selves.

What are you excited about?

I’m excited about facing challenges together, with my colleagues at MGH and MGB. I’m excited about the ongoing journey to build upon our MGH identity while realizing the promise of an integrated academic medical health system. There is so much talent and goodwill here.

What’s your favorite book?

This answer probably changes all of the time. I often come back to David Remnick’s *King of the World: Muhammad Ali and the Rise of an American Hero*. This beautifully written and researched narrative details the lives of the central characters and provides exquisite commentary on the social and political context of the rise of Cassius Clay to Champion Muhammad Ali as he converted to Islam and became the Heavyweight Champion of the World! If you need help understanding why Ali is such an important historical figure, this is the book. Also, anything by Ta-Nehisi Coates resonates.

Tell us about your heritage. How does your heritage influence your work?

Both of my parents were professional caregivers, supporting under-resourced and vulnerable populations in New York (I know I am supposed to say “oppressed,” but that’s another topic of discussion we can take up). My father was a surgeon and my mother a social worker. She focused on counseling at-risk youth, particularly female teenagers – run-aways, substance use disorder, and early pregnancy. The motivation to improve oneself in order to serve others is what I consider to be my heritage.