

Humans of CDI

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Emergency Medicine

Vice President and Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer for Faculty, Trainees, and Students
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Wendy Macias-Konstantopoulos, MD, MPH, MBA is Vice President and Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer for Faculty, Trainees, and Students for Massachusetts General Hospital and the Massachusetts General Physician's Organization. She is the Mass General Endowed Chair for Leadership in Emergency Medicine and Associate Professor of Emergency Medicine at Harvard Medical School. A board-certified practicing emergency physician, Dr. Macias-Konstantopoulos has dedicated her career to advocacy, research, and clinical expertise in the areas of maternal and child health, human trafficking/exploitation, gender- and community-based violence, substance use disorders, social determinants of health, and structural drivers of health inequities. Dr. Macias-Konstantopoulos received the Harvard Medical School and Harvard School of Dental Medicine's 2022 *Equity, Social Justice, and Advocacy Award*.

Dr. Macias-Konstantopoulos received her medical degree from the University of Vermont College of Medicine in 2003, after which she trained at the combined four-year Harvard-Affiliated Emergency Medicine Residency Program at Massachusetts General Hospital and Brigham and Women's Hospital. In 2009, as Dr. Macias-Konstantopoulos completed her two-year global health fellowship at Massachusetts General Hospital, she was awarded the *Clinician Teacher Development Award* and joined the Emergency Medicine faculty. Within the Mass General Department of Emergency Medicine, she has held multiple roles over the years, including Co-Chair for the Diversity & Inclusion Committee and Assistant Program Director for the residency program. She currently serves as Vice Chair for Diversity, Health Equity, and Inclusion and Inaugural Director of the Center for Social Justice and Health Equity, founded in 2019.

To learn more about the inspiring journey of Dr. Wendy Macias-Konstantopoulos and her unwavering efforts to reshape healthcare for the better, keep reading as we delve into the life and accomplishments of this remarkable advocate, researcher, and leader.

Tell us more about your new position. What excites you about your new role?

As Vice President and Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer for Faculty, Trainees, and Students for Massachusetts General Hospital (MGH) and the Massachusetts General Physician's Organization (MGPO), I am charged with guiding our institution's overarching strategy for continuing to advance diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging across our medical and scientific workforce. While the recent Supreme Court decision on affirmative action may impact admission practices and outcomes at institutions of higher learning including medical schools, I am excited about the unlocked potential of the healthcare system to effect more permanent change by creating more upstream foundational pathways for diversifying our healthcare workforce.

What do you want people/members of the CDI community to know about you?

I firmly believe a diverse and equitable workforce is foundational to our mission to provide exceptional patient care in a safe and compassionate environment. A workforce comprised of and led by individuals who value one another's backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives and come together for a common purpose, in the spirit of transparency, trust, and collaboration, has the makings of a strong healthcare team able to deliver high-quality equitable care and achieve extraordinary health outcomes for all.

What impact has receiving the PSDA/CTDA award had on your career and science?

Receiving the *Clinician Teacher Development Award* (CTDA) was timely, and its impact was profound. For one, the award afforded me the opportunity to continue the pioneering study of human trafficking at a time when its relevance to the healthcare community was vastly underappreciated despite grave health and public health implications. Having received the CTDA as I completed my global health fellowship at MGH, the award allowed me to pivot from the global stage to a domestic study of the problem at a critical time in my career when I was both looking to expand my young family and secure permanent employment. By examining the health impact of domestic forms of human trafficking and the gaps in healthcare for victims and survivors in the Greater Boston area, the award not only advanced science but also supported the groundbreaking development of a long-term, multipronged strategy for US academic medical centers to address human trafficking through research, education, policy advocacy, intersectoral collaboration, and specialized clinical care for persons with trafficking experiences.

How has CDI impacted your career?

Perhaps just as salient to my career trajectory as the award itself was the emblematic significance of being awarded the CTDA, at the time, funded by the MGH Center for Diversity and Inclusion, the MGPO, and the MGH Office of the President. Receiving the CTDA and securing a faculty position in the MGH Department of Emergency Medicine was, for me, a pivotal moment that gave rise to my deep-rooted connection to MGH as my academic and clinical home. The sense that professionals like me, from historically underrepresented communities, and our unique equity-related academic interests were valued, understood, and supported—at the highest levels of institutional leadership—as being relevant to the fabric of our institution fostered within me a strong sense of belonging—a powerfully motivating feeling that can energize, drive, and catapult academic careers.

What don't people know about you that they would be surprised to learn?

Most people would be surprised to learn that when I returned to the United States as a tween, after living my preschool and early childhood years in my parent's home country of Ecuador, I didn't speak or understand English. I spent my first academic school year immersed in an English classroom where I slowly progressed from understanding nothing to understanding just enough. At home, we spoke only Spanish, so it took me much longer to feel confident enough to speak. When I finally learned English well enough to speak more confidently, I was a stranger among the very classmates who had surrounded me for months. Although a common immigrant experience, we must remember that language barriers are uniquely othering and isolating, and in healthcare, they can result in devastating health outcomes.

What gives you hope?

I would say that despite all the challenges we face as a health system, nation, and community of global citizens, the one thing that continually gives me hope is the belief that challenges make us stronger and failures make us wiser and that together, as an interconnected web of humanity, we can inspire positive change toward the brighter future we all deserve, one that fits all of us and brings out the best in each of us.

Do you have a favorite quote?

Absolutely! I am especially fond of motivational quotes and my favorite contemporary quote was gifted to us by none other than Serena Williams: *"I've grown most not from the victories, but setbacks. If winning is God's reward, then losing is how he teaches us."*

If I were granted a second go at this question, I'd pick a quote that currently resonates across many industries, including healthcare (though I'm unsure of proper attribution): *The whole world is short-staffed. Be kind to those who showed up.*