BactiVac 6th Annual Network Meeting

5 – 6 November 2025

Speaker Profiles

Dr Galit Alter

VP Early Vaccines and Therapies, AstraZeneca, USA

Dr Galit Alter is an immunologist and microbiologist whose work sits at the interface of Systems Biology and Infectious Disease. Dr Alter's work has focused on the development of new technologies aimed at dissecting the power of the human immune response to viruses, bacteria, and parasites. At the start of the Systems Biology era, Dr Alter's pioneering work led to the creation of a novel platform called Systems Serology, that when coupled to machine learning or AI, aims to define the mechanism by which polyclonal humoral immune responses can leverage the innate immune system to control, clear, or eliminate infectious diseases. Coupled to an innovative systems Fc-engineering tool, Dr Alter's work has revealed often unexpected – corelates and mechanisms by which antibodies direct different components of the immune system. Having recently spent 2 years leading Immunology Research at Moderna, Dr Alter continues to develop new cutting-edge tools to dissect the complexity of the human immune response to non-infectious and Infectious diseases aimed at guiding vaccine and therapeutic design.

Dr Joanitah Atuhaire

Inspector of Drugs, National Drug Authority, Uganda and WHO TDR Clinical Research Fellow, University of Cape Town, South Africa

Joanitah Atuhaire is a seasoned research pharmacist with over 13 years of experience in Africa's health systems, spanning industry, hospital, community, and regulatory settings. She has spent more than seven years in drug regulation at the National Drug Authority, including five dedicated to pharmacovigilance and vaccine safety, where she regularly published safety information and presented internationally on emerging adverse drug reactions.

Joanitah's expertise bridges patient safety, antimicrobial resistance, large dataset analysis, and evidence-based health policy. She holds a Master of Health Services Research from the Makerere University School of Public Health and a Professional Certificate in Pharmacovigilance and Pharmacoepidemiology from the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine.

Currently a WHO-TDR Clinical Research Leadership Fellow at the University of Cape Town, Joanitah is passionate about advancing research to inform health policy and improve patient outcomes. She also coordinates efforts against antimicrobial resistance at the National Drug Authority.

Dr Ed Buurman

Alliance Director, CARB_X, USA

Ed has been an Alliance Director at CARB-X since 2019. Before that, he spent more than 20 years in large pharma (Pfizer, AstraZeneca) and biotech (Scriptgen/Anadys Pharmaceuticals), focusing on both therapeutic and preventive approaches to infections caused by viruses, bacteria and fungi. Over the years his responsibilities increased from bench scientist to research project lead and alliance director. He earned his PhD in Microbiology at the University of Amsterdam and continued his postdoctoral training at the University of Chicago and University of Aberdeen, UK.

Dr Carmen Coxon

Principal Scientist, Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency (MHRA), UK

Carmen spent for 10 years in target and drug discovery in the areas of cardiovascular disease and cancer at the Universities of Oxford and Bristol. She joined the MHRA Laboratories at South Mimms in 2017 as a Senior Fellow to investigate anti-drug antibody development in haemophilia A and develop reference materials to harmonise clinical assays used to detect and monitor ADA development.

After a brief spell at the Oxford Vaccine Group, she rejoined the MHRA to work on developing best practice guidance for microbiome medicinal products. Since 2024, she has lead the GAMRIF-funded MHRA team, supporting research and innovation across GAMRIF-funded portfolios.

Carmen is keen to support product developers through clear and transparent communication around regulatory requirements for product evaluation and approval, and in helping improve experimental quality and reproducibility through harmonising measurement.

Professor Adam Cunningham

Professor of Functional Immunity, University of Birmingham, UK

BactiVac Network Director

Professor Adam Cunningham gained his PhD from Southampton University for studies on antibody responses to *Chlamydia pneumoniae*. After a short-term position in The Gambia, funded by the WHO, he had his first post-doctoral position in Birmingham studying the cell wall of *Mycobacterium tuberculosis*. From here, he started work in Prof Ian MacLennan's group examining how antibody responses develop and are regulated. During this time, he incorporated the use of *Salmonella* and its component antigens into this work, leading to an independent position as a RCUK Roberts Academic Fellow, studying how immune responses develop to pathogens and vaccines. He was made Professor of Functional Immunity in August 2011, and his research is focused on how adaptive immunity to pathogens, and their component antigens are induced, maintained and function. In these studies, the focus is primarily on Gram-negative bacteria especially *Salmonella* Typhimurium. These studies help us understand why some responses are protective, whilst others are not or can even be harmful.

Dr Matthew Downham

Director Manufacturing & Supply Chain Networks, CEPI, UK

Dr Downham completed a BSc Hons Industrial Biology (London, UK) including a placement with Boehringer Mannheim (Penzberg, DE); PhD Biochemical Engineering (Birmingham, UK); PGCE f/h education (Bolton, UK); Post-doctoral bio-molecular research fellowship (Liverpool, UK). Joined biopharma in 1997 working for Protherics (UK), Bavarian Nordic & Morphosys (DE), Novartis Vaccines & Diagnostics (IT), Astra Zeneca (UK) on development, manufacture, scientific & technical affairs of vaccine, antibody, enzyme therapies for infectious, hypertension, inflammatory &/or oncology indications. He was EU Registered Toxicologist (2010-18); Chair, Vaccines EU Influenza working group (2017-20); Treasurer, International Federation of Pharmaceutical Manufacturers & Associations - Influenza Vaccine Supply task force (2017-20); Vice Chair, IFPMA Convention on Biological Diversity working group (2018-20). Dr Downham has co-authored 40 publications/abstracts and 3 international patents. In Jan'21, he joined CEPI (UK) as Sustainable Manufacturing Lead and since Feb'22 been Director, Manufacturing & Supply Chain Networks. Since Jan'23: WHO (CH) Member, Technical Advisory Group on Local Production & Technology Transfer of Health Products to the WHO LPA unit delivering resolution WHA74.6 (May'21) to strengthen local production of medicines & other health technologies to improve access.

Dr Arif Felek

Principal Scientist, Vaccines, Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency (MHRA), UK

Dr Arif Felek is a Principal Scientist at the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA), where he works at the intersection of science, regulation, and public health. His research focuses on some of the most challenging bacterial threats, including Group B Streptococcus, Neisseria gonorrhoeae, and Klebsiella pneumoniae. He leads multidisciplinary programmes that establish vaccine-related standards, create robust biological assays, refine formulations, and characterise novel antigen targets.

Earning his PhD in Inflammation and Repair from the University of Manchester, Arif has built deep expertise in microbiology, biochemistry, and physicochemical analysis. His work has produced internationally used reference standards and assays that help ensure vaccines are safe, effective, and accessible.
Arif thrives on collaboration and is working actively with WHO, universities and industry. He is passionate about training and mentoring scientists and enjoys taking science beyond the lab, engaging with patients and the public to connect cutting-edge research with real-world impact.

Dr Sheetal Ghelani

Director of Antimicrobial Resistance, Clinton Health Access Initiative, USA

Dr. Sheetal Ghelani is the Director of Antimicrobial Resistance at Clinton Health Access Initiative (CHAI). She is responsible all aspects of the program, from managing ongoing projects and donors to establishing new partnerships for collaboration, to setting strategy for CHAI's future AMR work. Additionally, she co-leads CHAI's Sickle Cell Disease Program, which aims to reducing pediatric morbidity and mortality of SCD in LMIC via market-shaping interventions and healthcare system engagement.

Previously, Dr. Ghelani managed CHAI's Global Health Sciences operations and oversaw internal and external collaborations across several CHAI disease areas to support the development of pre-and post-market drug products in resource-constrained markets. Dr. Ghelani previously supported the development and commercialization of CHAI's pediatric HIV drug portfolio by coordinating engagement with innovator and generic pharmaceutical companies in technology transfer, clinical studies, and price negotiation. Additionally, she is a founding member of WHO's GAP-f consortium, which aims implement pediatric formulation development of several products in HIV, hepatitis C, TB, and anti-bacterials by bridging the gap between innovator and generic development.
Dr. Ghelani has significant experience in public/private partnerships, technology transfer, market shaping, communications, fundraising, price negotiation and research. Her background includes proposal development at PPD, a CRO; leading business development at a nonprofit research institute; teaching at UNC Charlotte, and academic research at the Mount Sinai School of Medicine. She holds a Ph.D. in Developmental Immunology from the University of Alabama Birmingham.

Professor William Hausdorff

Lead, Public Health Vaccine Value Propositions, Center for Vaccine Innovation and Access, PATH, USA

Trained as a biochemist at the Johns Hopkins University, the US National Institutes of Health and Duke University, Bill Hausdorff's vaccine career started at the US Agency for International Development and Centers for Disease Control in Washington DC and Cairo, Egypt, where he worked to catalyse introduction of new vaccines into developing country immunization programs.

Bill subsequently spent 2 decades at two vaccine companies, first at Wyeth Vaccines in Rochester NY in the Scientific Affairs & Research Strategy group, and then at GlaxoSmithKline Vaccines in Wavre, Belgium where he served as Director of Epidemiology and later Vaccine Development Leader for pneumococcal conjugate vaccines. For the past 7 years he has been based at the international health NGO PATH in Washington DC, and is currently Lead, Meningococcal Vaccine Development and Vaccine Value Propositions. He is also Professor in the Faculty of Medicine, Université Libre de Bruxelles, Belgium.

Bill is author of over 100 scientific articles, including a recent review in Lancet Global Health on the need for and challenges to combination vaccine development and use. He serves on WHO's Product Development Vaccine Advisory Committee (PDVAC).

Mr Sameer Kanwar

Director- Digital Health, AI & Med Tech, PATH, South Asia

Sameer has over 3 decades of experience in the Digital, Information and Communication Technology domain and has been a part of strategic think-tanks for adoption of technology across different verticals. His areas of expertise include strategic planning, design, adoption and implementation of cross-cutting technologies across different programs in an integrated manner to achieve continuum.

Presently, he is the Director for Digital Health with PATH and supports the South Asia Region. The role envisages strategizing, planning and implementing end to end integrated digital health systems as part of health system strengthening. He has worked with the University of Manitoba as Director Digital Health & ICT as part of Technical Support Unit in India. This was preceded with a stint as the Head of National Nutrition Resource Centre, Tata Trusts, supporting the Ministry the implementation of Government of India's flagship National Nutrition Mission. Sameer has also steered his own start-up in digital space and has had an illustrious career of more than 20 years working in the government, in various capacities.

He has a Bachelor's degree in Electronics & telecommunications and a Master's degree in Computer Science & Information Technology.

Dr Hani Kim

Executive Director, The RIGHT Foundation, South Korea

Hani Kim is the Executive Director of the RIGHT Foundation, Korea, with nearly 30 years of experience in biomedical research in academia and global health R&D funding organizations. At the RIGHT Foundation, Hani significantly expanded RIGHT's investment areas in evidence generation, technology transfer and training. Prior to joining the RIGHT foundation in 2021, Hani has served as a Research Associate at the Johns Hopkins School of Public Health and trained research officers at the icddr,b in Bangladesh and the Kenyan Medical Research Institute. Additionally, Hani spent 6.5 years at the Gates Foundation and developed and managed investment portfolios focused on vaccine discovery and molecular surveillance.

She completed her PhD in Lab Medicine and Pathobiology at the University of Toronto, Canada and post-doctoral training in molecular immunology at the Max-Planck Institute of Immunology, Germany, and an MPH at the Johns Hopkins School of Public Health.

Hani has authored papers in translational research as well as in the political origins of health inequity. Her recent articles include 'We need people's WHO to solve vaccine inequity, and we need it now', 'The implicit ideological function of the global health field and its role in maintaining relations of power', 'The sociopolitical context of the COVID-19 response in South Korea', and 'A critical assessment of the ideological underpinnings of current practice in global health and their historical origins'.

Dr Fabian Maza

Science Officer, International Centre for Antimicrobial Resistance Solutions (ICARS), Denmark

Fabian Maza is a trained medical doctor with work experience in primary care and clinical research. He holds a Master of Medical Science in Global Health and was a Swedish Institute scholar between 2020-2022. As a Science Officer at ICARS, he provides support to Science Team with the development and implementation of ICARS' portfolio of projects in LMICs on AMR mitigation. In the past, he had the opportunity to work as a Young Researcher at the Ministry of Science in Colombia and collaborate with the Pan American Health Organization in different research studies conducted in Latin America. Before joining ICARS, Fabian worked as a project assistant at ReAct – Action on Antibiotic Resistance, where he supported the advocacy and development efforts of projects such as the ReAct Toolbox.

Dr Francesca Micoli

Director, GVGH Innovation Academy, GSK Vaccines Institute for Global Health, Italy

BactiVac Network Co-Director

PhD in industrial organic chemistry awarded at the University of Florence, Italy, in 2006. From 2007 working in the field of vaccines, focusing her research on the development of effective and affordable vaccines for neglected diseases in impoverished communities. Involved in the development of vaccines against Salmonella Typhi, Salmonella Paratyphi A, non-typhoidal Salmonella, Shigella, Group A Streptococcus, klebsiella pneumoniae and Neisseria meningitidis. She has been Technology Platform Head at GVGH, working on two main technology platforms, glycoconjugation and Generalised Modules for Membrane Antigens (GMMA). From April 2020, Senior Project Leader (leading the programs for vaccines development against *Shigella* and *Klebsiella pneumoniae*); from 2021 also Director of the Innovation Academy, focused on innovative technologies (nanoparticles, monoclonal antibodies, mRNA, adjuvants, alternative delivery systems) for vaccine development. Author of more than 100 scientific publications and several patent applications, with many collaborations in place with academic and industrial partners.

Professor Mariagrazia Pizza

Professor of Microbiology, Imperial College London, UK

Mariagrazia Pizza is Professor of Microbiology and Co-Director of the Centre for Bacterial Resistance Biology (CBRB) at Imperial College London. She holds a degree in Chemistry and Pharmaceutical Technologies from the University of Naples and began her scientific career with a fellowship at the EMBO laboratories in Heidelberg. She spent over 30 years in vaccine research and development, leading several major bacterial vaccine projects and contributing to the identification and characterization of novel vaccine antigens.

Before joining Imperial, she was Senior Scientific Director for Bacterial Vaccines at GSK and Head of Research at the GSK Vaccine Institute for Global Health (GVGH). Her work has advanced the understanding of bacterial pathogenesis and informed the development of vaccines addressing major public health threats.

She is currently investigating new virulence factors and antigens of Klebsiella pneumoniae, a key multidrug-resistant pathogen, to support future vaccine design.

Mariagrazia has received multiple international awards, is elected fellow of EMBO, European Academy of Microbiology, American Academy of Microbiology, and Academia Europaea. She serves on the WHO Product Development for Vaccines Advisory Committee (PDVAC) and is Vice Chair of the Bacteriology Division of the International Union of Microbiological Societies (IUMS). She is author of over 250 scientific publications and inventor on 70 patents.

Professor Farah Naz Qamar

Associate Dean of Research, Aga Khan University, Pakistan

Professor Farah Naz Qamar is the Associate Dean Research at Aga Khan University. Professor Farah Naz Qamar is a distinguished clinical researcher with over 15 years of experience, specializing in pediatric infectious diseases with a particular focus on enteric infections, antimicrobial resistance and vaccine preventable diseases. Among her most notable achievements is leading research that directly contributed to the introduction of the Typhoid Conjugate Vaccine (TCV) into Pakistan's national immunization program and beyond. Her work has been instrumental in shaping global health policies, as evidenced by its translation into WHO recommendations.

Professor Qamar has served on numerous national and international advisory boards, including the Strategic Advisory Group of Experts (SAGE), the advisory committee for cholera and Covid Vaccine Advisory committee, where her expertise has influenced critical policy decisions. With over 100 publications in high-impact journals and a grant portfolio exceeding $12 million, she has led multi-country trials and surveillance projects funded by renowned organizations such as the Gates Foundation, WHO, GAVI, and CEPI.

Her exceptional contributions to public health have earned her Pakistan's Presidential Tamgha-e-Imtiaz, recognizing her pivotal role in typhoid prevention. Additionally, she is a visiting faculty member at the University of Oxford, further underscoring her international recognition and dedication to advancing global health through research and mentorship.

Dr Zaril Harza Zakaria

Head of Investigational Product & Safety Section, National Pharmaceutical Regulatory Agency, Ministry of Health Malaysia, Malaysia

Dr Zaril Harza Zakaria is a Regulatory Pharmacist with over 20 years of experience in regulatory pharmacy, clinical trial evaluation, and research. He holds a Ph.D. and Master's from UK universities.

His expertise includes regulatory pharmacy, covering product registration, clinical trial evaluation (FIH, vaccines), and clinical trial facility inspection. He is also skilled in research and development, focusing on pharmacokinetics, clinical research, policy development, and guideline formulation.

Key achievements include presenting the "First in Human (FIH) Regulatory Framework" at international webinars (PMDA-ATC, 2020) and serving as a WHO Expert for performance evaluation framework development (2020). He chaired the ASEAN Joint Sectoral Committee on Mutual Regulatory Acceptance for Bio-Equivalence Study Reports (2019). Dr. Zaril has published multiple peer-reviewed articles in international journals on pharmacokinetics and drug interactions. He holds key roles as Secretary of the National Research Committee (2019-Present) and Member of the National Committee for Research Ethics and Cell Therapy (2021-Present). He was also a member of the COVID-19 Vaccine Candidate Selection Subcommittee (2020). He is actively involved in drafting the Clinical Trial Regulation for Investigational Products (2022-Present) and the "Malaysian Guideline for Application of Clinical Trial Import License and Clinical Trial Exemption" (2021-Present).

He has held various positions at the National Pharmaceutical Regulatory Agency (NPRA) since 2003, including Head of Section, Investigational Product Evaluation and Safety (Dec 2019 - Present) and Deputy Director, Centre for New Investigational Product (Sep 2018 - Dec 2019).