

Cardiovascular Grand Challenge 2026
*AI-powered transformation in cardiovascular health:
From discovery to clinical practice*

Expert Panel

Panel Chair:



Robert Califf (*Duke University, USA*): Robert is a cardiologist and was Vice Chancellor for Clinical & Translational Research at Duke University. He was also Director of the Duke Translational Medicine Institute and Founding Director of the Duke Clinical Research Institute, and served 2 terms as FDA Commissioner (under Presidents Obama and Biden). Between his FDA terms, Robert was Head of Strategy & Policy for Verily and Google Health and served on the BHF International Advisory Panel for Big Beat Challenge.

Panel Members:



Richard Ashcroft (*City St George's, UK*): Richard is Executive Dean for The City Law School and Professor of Bioethics. He has had numerous public roles, including a year as an Alan Turing Fellow at the Alan Turing Institute, working on ethics and artificial intelligence in healthcare. He served on the BHF Special Panel for Big Beat Challenge, to support the assessment of ethical aspects of applications.



Junaid Bajwa (*Flagship Pioneering, UK/USA*): Junaid is Senior Partner, Head of UK at Flagship and Science Partner for Flagship's Pioneering Intelligence initiative. He is also a Clinical Associate Professor at University College London and a Visiting Scientist at Harvard and NTU Singapore. He was Chief Medical Scientist at Microsoft Research, focusing on how trusted, reliable, and human-centred AI can transform the practice of medicine.



Ami Bhatt (*WHOOOP, USA*): Ami is Chief Medical Officer at WHOOOP, supporting the clinical and scientific strategy behind continuous physiologic monitoring, to turn everyday wearable data into something clinicians can trust and patients can act on. A Harvard and Yale-trained cardiologist and former Chief Innovation Officer at the American College of Cardiology, Ami's career spans clinical medicine, institutional leadership, and the governance of technology in healthcare. As former Chair of the FDA Digital Health Advisory Committee, she led discussions on governance that shape how AI tools enter clinical practice.



Melanie Ivarsson (*HDRS, UK*): Melanie is CEO of UK's new Health Data Research Service (HDRS), leading efforts to accelerate understanding of what causes disease and discovery of life-saving drugs, while protecting the public's data. She brings a wealth of expertise in healthcare innovation and industry, having led the clinical trials that produced one of the world's first COVID-19 vaccines at Moderna. She has also held senior roles at pharma firms Eli Lilly, Pfizer and Takeda and has a strong research background from university posts in the UK, USA and Sweden.



Tariq Khokhar (*System, UK/USA*): Tariq is VP Public Benefit at System, a New York-based Public Benefit Corporation whose aim is "to relate everything, to help the world see and solve anything, as a system". He was Chief Data Scientist and Head of Data for Science and Health at the Wellcome Trust until January 2026, and previously Chief Data Scientist & Managing Director at the Rockefeller Foundation and Senior Data Scientist & Global Data Editor at the World Bank.



Jessica Mega (*Stanford Health Care, USA*): A leader at the intersection of technology, life science, and health, Dr Mega is a cardiologist at Stanford and serves on the Advisory Board for Stanford's Center for Digital Health. She is a Co-Founder of Alphabet's Verily, former Chief Medical Officer of Google Life Sciences, and Senior Advisor at SandboxAQ. Previously, as faculty member at Harvard Medical School, Senior Investigator with the TIMI Study Group, and cardiologist at Brigham and Women's Hospital, she led large international clinical trials and directed the TIMI Genomics Program.



David Michalovich (*Independent, UK*): David is a scientific consultant with translational expertise from a career in pharma and UK biotech. As VP of Translational Sciences at GSK, he established and co-led a translational discovery group anchored in genomics, genetics and AI-based mapping of underlying pathological processes at single-cell resolution. As SVP Precision Medicine at BenevolentAI, he led a precision medicine strategy through a patient centric approach to understanding disease endotypes, mechanisms and targets.



Oliver Stegle (*ELLIS, Germany*): Oliver is Director of the ELLIS Unit, a community of AI researchers aiming to unlock new solutions to key challenges in health and life sciences. He leads computational genomics and systems genetics groups at DKFZ and EMBL, where his group's research focuses on studying molecular variation and its phenotypic consequences, by developing advanced machine learning and statistical techniques to investigate large multi-omics data.



Eleftheria Zeggini (*Helmholtz Munich, Germany*): Eleftheria is Director of the Institute of Translational Genomics and Liesel Beckmann Distinguished Professor at Technical University Munich School of Medicine. Her group's research focuses on leveraging big data in genetics and genomics for medically important human traits, to gain insights into mechanisms of disease development and progression, and help shorten the path to translation and empower precision medicine.