



# **Roundtable II: Learning from Past Experience Speaker Biographies**

*Bioethics in Commercial Space Travel:  
Charting Humanity's Next Frontier*

**February 19, 2026  
12:00–1:30 p.m. EST  
Via Zoom**



**DR. VOLKER DAMANN**  
International Space University  
*Discussant*

Prof. Volker Damann has dedicated his career and life's work to Aerospace medicine. Beginning in 1989 he served for 6 years as a space flight surgeon at the German Aerospace Research Center (DLR). During that time, he supported 8 Shuttle and 2 Soyuz/MIR missions. In 1995 he became the Lead Flight Surgeon and in 1998 the Head of the Crew Medical Support Office at the European Astronaut Center (EAC) of the European Space Agency (ESA) in Cologne, Germany. Prof. Damann led the development of the ESA crew medical office from the ground up, including the development of the Flight Surgeon and Biomedical engineering mission support console in Cologne and both the astronaut physical training and behavior health and performance functions at the EAC.

In January 2016 he began work at the International Space University (ISU) in Strasbourg, France. As a full professor he was responsible for the educational activities for the "Space Studies" Master Program in the domain "Human Performance in Space". Volker also taught as a visiting lecturer at the Technical University in Dresden (Germany) and the Technical University Berlin (Germany) on topics of human performance and space medicine for aero-space engineers and occupational psychologists. Volker Damann worked in close cooperation with King's college, London, UK, to develop a new Master program "Space Physiology and Health" and enrolled the first students in the term 2010/2011. This program allows providing specialty education for the next generation of space health care providers.

Volker has been very active in the Aero Space Medical Association (AsMA) serving in multiple functions both on the ASMA council and in constituent organizations. He is an AsMA Fellow since 2014 and was a member of the AsMA Executive Committee and Council and served as the Vice President "International Services" until 2020. He is member of the "Pilot Mental Health Expert Group" and supported the recent revision of the expert group's recommendations after the German Wings tragedy.

Volker Damann retired from ESA in September 2019 and remains a faculty member of

the ISU. He is a former chair of the ISU Academic Council and the ISU Committee on Academic Appointment, Review and Evaluation



**CHARLES DOARN**  
SolaMed Solutions  
*Subject Matter Expert*

Charles Doarn serves as the director of the University of Cincinnati (UC) Armstrong Institute for Space, Technology and Research (ASTRO). In addition, he is an Emeritus Professor in the Department of Environmental and Public Health Sciences, UC College of Medicine. He has academic appointments at the full professor level in Political Science at UC, Aerospace Medicine at Wright State University, and Emergency Medicine at George Washington University. From 1990-2023, he provided subject matter expertise in aerospace medicine and telemedicine to NASA's Chief Health and Medical Officer and served as the co-chair of Federal Telehealth Working Group for the U.S. Government. Professor Doarn has worked closely the NATO, the Department of Defense, and the Department of State as a Fulbright Specialist.

He received his undergraduate degree in Biological Sciences (Microbiology) from The Ohio State University in 1980 and an MBA from the University of Dayton in 1988. Additional training includes the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) Aircraft Mishap Investigation Course, Ashburn, VA and Advanced Program Management at NASA's Wallops Flight Facility, VA.

As the Editor-in-Chief of the Telemedicine and e-Health Journal (since 2005), Doarn is a highly recognized leader in telemedicine and telehealth as a scholar and teacher, having published 10 books, over 475 manuscripts, editorials, federal reports and nearly 55 book chapters. Doarn is an award-winning author and editor. He is an editor of the 4th edition of Space Physiology and Medicine: Evidence to Practice (ISBN 978-1-4939-6650-9); an editor of A Multinational Telemedicine System for Disaster Response: Opportunities and Challenges. NATO Publication (ISBN 978-1-61499-727-6); an editor of Engineering, Life Sciences, and Health/Medicine Synergy in Aerospace Human Systems Integration. The Rosetta Stone Project. NASA SP-2017-633. (ISBN 978-1-62683-044-8); and Telemedicine, Telehealth, and Telepresence: Principles, Strategies, Applications and New Directions. Editors. R Latifi, CR Doarn, RC Merrell. Springer, New York. ISBN 978-3-030-56916-7. 2021. He co-authored NASA's Mishap Investigation Flight Surgeon Handbook - NASA SP-2020-5006891.

Professor Doarn is a fellow of the ATA and Chair of that College and a fellow of the Aerospace Medical Association, a member of the International Academy of Astronautics (IAA), an Honorary NASA Flight Surgeon, recipient of the Astronaut's award, the Silver Snoopy for his work in Telemedicine for NASA worldwide, and received NASA's Exceptional Public Service Medal (2024). Professor Doarn was recognized by the ATA with the 2016 Individual Leadership Award for his efforts nationally and internationally in telemedicine and in the 2023 with the ATA CEO Special Recognition Award. He and his co-authors were recognized with the IAA's 2018 Luigi Napolitano Book Award in the Life Sciences.

**DR. STEPHEN HART**  
NASA  
*Discussant*

Dr. Stephen Hart is a Flight Surgeon and Neurologist with almost 30 years of experience at NASA. He completed the UTMB Aerospace Medicine Residency in 1999. His career included working as a Crew Surgeon for 11 long duration ISS missions, each bracketed by Shuttle, Soyuz or Dragon flights, as well as two Shuttle flights, including STS-107. He was ground support for all of the crewed and un-crewed Starliner flights, and assigned to the Starliner-2 Crew scheduled to launch this year. He also has supported the (Space Adaptation Neuro-ocular Syndrome SANS) investigations and the Acoustics and Hearing Protection programs for spaceflight.



**DR. SMITH JOHNSTON**  
SolaMed Solutions  
*Subject Matter Expert*

Dr. Johnston has spent most of his career as a Medical Officer and Operational Flight Surgeon for NASA's Medical Operations Branch at the Johnson Space Center. Over 35 years, he supported the medical care of the Astronaut Corps, their families, and retired astronauts. He provided operational support for two ISS Expedition missions and more than 25 Shuttle missions, including Neurolab STS-90, the Hubble repair missions STS-91 and STS-109, and the STS-107 Columbia mission. In his final years at NASA, he served as Medical Director of the Aerospace and Occupational Medicine Clinics and led NASA's Astronaut Medical Selection and Retention Standards, as well as programs in fatigue management, human health, performance, and longevity.

He became Axiom Space's first Chief Medical Officer in 2019 and retired after the successful Ax-1 mission, the first commercial crewed mission to the ISS. He recently joined the Aerospace Medicine faculty at the University of Central Florida and serves as Director of Health Innovation at SOLAMED Solutions, in addition to consulting for multiple commercial companies.

Dr. Johnston has authored over 100 publications and eight book chapters and has received major honors including the NASA Distinguished and Exceptional Service Medals, the Society of NASA Flight Surgeons Lovelace Award (2011), the Space Medicine Association Lifetime Achievement Award (2012), and the Kerwin Award (2021). Board-certified in Aerospace Medicine, he is an Emeritus Fellow of the Aerospace Medical Association. His educational work on space medicine and its applications to human health has been featured widely, including in NOVA, Discovery Channel, Scientific American, The New York Times, The Wall Street Journal, and numerous podcasts.



**DR. SARALYN MARK**  
SolaMed Solutions  
*Moderator*

**Saralyn Mark, MD, FAMWA**, is an endocrinologist and women's health specialist and the founder and CEO of **SolaMed Solutions**, including its space medicine subsidiary. She is also the founder of **iGIANT®**, a nonprofit focused on advancing sex- and gender-specific design.

Dr. Mark has served as a medical and scientific advisor to the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy, NASA, and other public- and private-sector organizations. She previously served as Senior Medical Advisor to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Office on Women's Health and to NASA, where she contributed to initiatives spanning public health, emerging technologies, and human performance in space.

She is an adjunct Associate Professor at Yale and Georgetown Universities and a Distinguished Senior Fellow at George Mason University. Dr. Mark is the author of *Stellar Medicine* and has received multiple awards for distinguished public service.



**DR. ED POWERS**  
University of Central Florida  
*Discussant*

Ed Powers is the Chief Medical Officer of the Center for Aerospace and Extreme Environments Medicine (CASEEM) at the University of Central Florida in Orlando. He joined UCF in October 2025 after serving as a supervisory medical officer at the Federal Aviation Administration. His previous employment includes director of flight medicine for Axiom Space, director of the aerospace medicine residency program at the University of Texas Medical Branch in Galveston, director of the university flight medicine clinic, and chief of NASA's Medical Operations Branch. He has extensive experience with the medical management of human spaceflight including six missions of the Space Shuttle program, four missions of the Russian Soyuz program, and three commercial space missions with Axiom Space.

Dr. Powers holds bachelor's and master's degrees in biomedical engineering and a master's degree in aerospace medicine. He is residency trained, and board certified in the specialties of Aerospace Medicine and Emergency Medicine, and he has served as the medical director of several emergency departments. He was awarded a Fulbright Scholarship to lecture on the topics of Aerospace Medicine and Emergency Medicine for six months at the University of Vienna, Austria and he was principal investigator for several FAA research projects concerning commercial human spaceflight.



**DR. VASILIKI RAHIMZADEH**  
Baylor University College of  
Medicine  
*Ethicist*

Vasiliki Rahimzadeh, PhD, is an assistant professor of medical ethics and health policy at Baylor College of Medicine. Her National Institutes of Health-funded research program investigates the ethical, legal and social issues (ELSI) of sharing genomic and related health data on Earth and in space. She directs the Mission to Enhance Ethics Education, Outreach and Research in Space (METEORS) program where she contributes to evidence-based standards for human research protections in the commercial spaceflight industry and supports space medicine investigators navigate emerging ELSI in their work. She is also a standing member of the Bioethics Panel for the National Aeronautics and Space Administration and chairs the Astro-Ethics Affinity Group through the American Society for Bioethics and Humanities. Dr. Rahimzadeh has a BS in microbial biology from the University of California Berkeley and earned a PhD with specialization in biomedical ethics from McGill University before completing a postdoctoral fellowship at Stanford University.



**DR. JOAN SAARY**  
Royal College of Physicians and  
Surgeons  
*Discussant*

Dr. Saary is an Occupational Medicine specialist certified by the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada with niche expertise in aerospace and diving medicine from various institutions including the Canadian Forces School of Operational Medicine. She also holds an MSc in clinical psychology and PhD in medical science leading to a Clinician-Investigator qualification and for which she received national recognition from the Royal Society of Canada.

Dr. Saary wears many hats:

- She is an Associate Professor of Medicine, and the Director of the Division of Occupational Medicine at the University of Toronto where she is developing an accreditable Aerospace Medicine Fellowship, a first of its kind in Canada, having already developed Aerospace Medicine Rounds, and the Care-in the-Air Symposium, a collaboration with the provincial air ambulance service.
- She has a lengthy relationship as a consultant for the Canadian Space Agency. She has been Chair of the Medical Standards and Health Evaluation Working group for ISS since 2013 and is now also working with the Artemis Medical Standards group.
- She is also a longstanding consultant to the Canadian Armed Forces, she is actively engaged in initial aircrew selection, and teaching in the school of operational medicine. She has represented Canada on various NATO panels, and her research with the Canadian White Matter Hyperintensity study has contributed to improved understanding of the impacts of stressors of flight on brain health in aviators.

For her achievements, she has received National and International awards, was named one of Canada's "Top 25 Women in Defence" in 2021, and was recently nominated for the 2025 Canadian Women Entrepreneur Awards. She has mentored hundreds of students, many award-winning and thriving in these fields themselves including her own 2 children, one of whom is a commercial float pilot in northern Canada.

Command Team's Commendation in June and was also honoured this year with the Eric Liljencrantz Award.



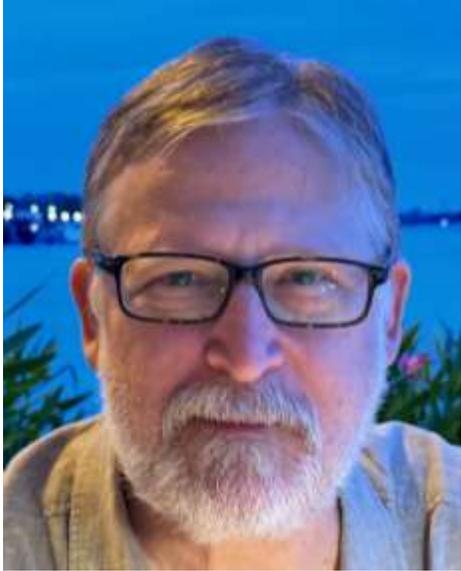
**MEGAN SIEFFERT, ESQ.**  
Applied Materials  
*Discussant*

Megan Sieffert is an aerospace, semiconductor, and advanced-technology attorney whose career bridges federal oversight, cutting-edge space programs, and high-growth commercial innovation. She currently serves as Segment Business Counsel at Applied Materials, guiding complex commercial, government, and technology transactions for global semiconductor and precision-manufacturing programs. Previously, she was Associate General Counsel at Vast and held senior in-house roles at Axiom Space and Slingshot Aerospace, supporting commercial space station development, astronaut missions, and national-security space software. Megan's foundation as an aerospace lawyer was forged at NASA's Office of Inspector General, where she helped safeguard federal resources by supporting investigations and oversight across NASA's Earth Science portfolio, launch services, and the Commercial Crew Program. She also maintains a robust pro bono practice advising scientific and aerospace startups at the pre-funding stage to accelerate innovation and expand access to space.



**KONRAD SZOCIK**  
University of Information  
Technology & Management  
*Ethicist*

Konrad Szocik is a philosopher and bioethicist, and professor and vice-rector for research and international cooperation at the University of Information Technology and Management in Rzeszów, Poland. His research focuses on the philosophy, ethics, and bioethics of space exploration, human enhancement, feminist bioethics, population ethics, and selected issues at the intersection of futures studies, technology, and the environmental crisis. He is the author of *The Bioethics of Space Exploration* (Oxford University Press, 2023) and *Feminist Bioethics in Space: Gender Inequality in Space Exploration* (Oxford University Press, 2024), as well as numerous journal articles and book chapters on space ethics, space bioethics, antinatalism, and climate-related existential risk. Previously, he was a Visiting Fellow at the Yale Interdisciplinary Center for Bioethics (2021–2022).



**DR. PAUL ROOT WOLPE**  
Emory University  
*Moderator*

Paul Root Wolpe, Ph.D., is the Raymond Schinazi Distinguished Research Chair of Jewish Bioethics at Emory University and Professor of Medicine, Pediatrics, Psychiatry, Sociology, and Neuroscience and Behavioral Biology. After 16 years directing Emory's Center for Ethics, he is now building the university's Center for Peacebuilding and Conflict Transformation (PACT). Dr. Wolpe spent 17 years as NASA's first Senior Bioethicist, shaping policies for human health in spaceflight, and served as the first National Bioethics Advisor to Planned Parenthood Federation of America. He is Past President of both the Association of Bioethics Program Directors and the American Society for Bioethics and Humanities, and is a Fellow of the Hastings Center and the College of Physicians of Philadelphia. He received an Honorary Doctorate of Humane Letters in 2019.

A national thought leader, Dr. Wolpe's work examines the ethical, social, and ideological impact of medicine and biotechnology. A founder of neuroethics and former Editor-in-Chief of *AJOB Neuroscience*, he was named one of Trust Across America's "Top 100 Thought Leaders in Trustworthy Business Behavior" and received the 2011 World Technology Network Award in Ethics, the 2022 Tzedek Award, and the 2025 Humanitarian Award from the International Center for Missing and Exploited Children.

Author of more than 150 publications and over 500 invited presentations, Dr. Wolpe has been recognized as a Faculty Row "SuperProfessor" and a Teaching Company "Superstar Teacher." His TED Talk has over two million views, and he has been featured widely in media, including *60 Minutes* and a personal profile in the *New York Times Science Times*.



**DR. MATTHEW WYNIA**  
University of Colorado  
*Ethicist*

Dr. Wynia is a clinician-researcher and leader in bioethics with a history of exploring some of the most contentious ethical issues in health care, focusing on those related to the social roles of health professionals. He is a professor of medicine and of public health at the University of Colorado, where he directs the CU Center for Bioethics and Humanities.

Prior to his current role, he spent 18 years at the American Medical Association, where he led the AMA's Institute for Ethics and Center for Patient Safety, and he was the Director of Patient and Physician Engagement for the Improving Health Outcomes team. While there, he co-founded the Commission to End Health Care Disparities and he led the Project on the History of African-Americans and the Medical Profession that, in 2008, prompted the AMA's public apology for a legacy of racial discrimination and exclusion in organized medicine. He has served on advisory boards for the US DHHS Office of Minority, the Joint Commission, the American Board of Medical Specialties, American Board of Internal Medicine, and other national medical, public health and bioethics professional organizations. At the National Academies, he currently serves on the Board on Health Sciences Policy and has served on multiple consensus committees and chaired special projects on team-based care, transdisciplinary professionalism, and public health approaches to preventing ideologically-motivated violence.



**LAURIE ZOLOTH**  
University of Chicago  
*Ethicist*

Professor Laurie Zoloth holds the Margaret E. Burton Chair of Religion and Ethics at the University of Chicago. She has a distinguished career as a bioethicist and scholar of Jewish ethics, writing or editing 10 books, and over 350 articles. She was both President of the American Academy of Religion and President of the American Society for Bioethics and Humanities, receiving its Distinguished Service Award in 2007. She was a co-founder of the Society for Jewish Ethics and founding chair of the HHMI Bioethics Board. She served on the NASA National Advisory Council, for which she received the NASA National Public Service Award. She has served as both the dean of the Divinity School and as Senior Advisory on Social Ethics at the University of Chicago. Her honors include the Graduate Theological Union's alumna of the year, an honorary doctorate from the American Jewish University, the Engelhardt Award in Bioethics and the Borsch-Rast Book Award in Religion. She is a Fellow of the Hastings Center and a Life Member of Clare Hall, University of Cambridge. In addition to her 1999 book about justice and health care policy, [The Ethics of Encounter](#), and five edited books, her most recent books (2022-2023) are [Second Texts and Second Opinions: Essays toward a Jewish Bioethics](#) and [Ethics for the Coming Storm: Climate Change and Jewish Thought](#), both from Oxford University Press, and [May We Make the World?: Gene Drives, Malaria, and the Future of Nature](#), from MIT.