



IFMBE
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Women-in-STEM Luncheon

EMPOWERING EQUITY-DESERVING
GROUPS TO FOSTER INNOVATION

WEDNESDAY, MAY 28, 2025
12:00 PM – 1:00 PM

Join us for an insightful panel discussion where we explore the critical role of equity-deserving groups in driving innovation within the biomedical engineering and medical device industry. Our distinguished panelists, including leaders in entrepreneurship, clinical practice, and engineering, will share their experiences and successes in creating inclusive environments that empower diverse voices. Discover how fostering equity not only enriches the engineering field but also leads to groundbreaking advancements and sustainable solutions. Be part of the conversation that champions diversity, equity, and innovation.





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Meet the Panelists

FAZILA SEKER

CEO

Insight Medbotics

Fazila Seker, PhD, has 20+ years of experience in new technology commercialization within healthcare, energy, and specialty materials sectors. She has held leadership roles with the GE Global Research Center in Niskayuna, NY; MaRS Innovation and, as Co-Founder, President and CEO of MOLLI Surgical (acquired by Stryker) in Toronto, Canada.

In 2023, Fazila was appointed CEO and Board Director of Insight Medbotics, an early-stage medical device company developing a new category of surgical robotics for use inside MRI. Under Fazila's leadership, the company achieved the first and only FDA 510K clearance for use of a robot inside MRI and is focused on enabling a better standard of precision cancer care, starting with prostate.

Building high-performance, award-winning cultures means Fazila's teams have been recognized for their work across her career. Those accolades include Gold in the prestigious Medical Design Excellence Awards in the ER & OR (tools and supplies category); TIME Best Inventions 2022; Fast Company Next Big Things in Tech 2022; the 2021 list of Best Workplaces™ Managed by Women; and the 2022 list of Best Workplaces™ in Health Care.





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Meet the Panelists

COLLEEN O'CONNELL

Professor, Physical Medicine and
Rehabilitation
Dalhousie University

Colleen O'Connell, MD, FRCPC is a professor of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation at Dalhousie University. She specializes in neuro-rehabilitation, and is Medical Director and Research Chief of New Brunswick's Stan Cassidy Centre for Rehabilitation and is Clinical Research Director of University of New Brunswick Institute of Biomedical Engineering.

As Co-Chair of the World Health Organization supported World Rehabilitation Alliance, and chair of the International Spinal Cord Society emergencies subcommittee, she collaborates with an international team to advocate for the strengthening of rehabilitation in health systems. Research interests are broad, tending to early adoption of technology (FOMO) in mobility and function. She has authored and provided technical guidance on rehabilitation in the humanitarian space, including disaster and conflicts, with infield emergencies humanitarian work including Haiti, Nepal and Ukraine.





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MICHAEL BARTON

Clinical Engineer
Nova Scotia Health

Our theme this year is “Empowering Equity-deserving Groups to Foster Innovation”... I love this theme. I am what I term an “equitist.” I don't like it when anyone doesn't have equitable access to anything. I used to have a philosophy of different folks need different supports to “see over the fence” (if you can picture that now famous graphic). Now I tend to think “how can we all work to eliminate the fences?”

A diverse team provides an excellent basis for a strong, well-rounded, and considered discussion to lead to better directions and decision-making. Our immediate sphere of influence is our Biomed realm and that's what we've focussed on to-date. It would be nice to achieve a good level of equitable access for our various Biomed teams for the sake of a stronger overall team, but then also to have influence on other areas in our hospitals. For instance, by our example can they fix their team member access to be more equitable (e.g. Facilities is very male-oriented, Nursing is almost exclusively female-oriented)? As part of a broader health care team, we all still have so much work to do.





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RASHMI PRAKASH
Co-founder and CEO
Aruna Revolution

Addressing the critical issue of menstrual product waste, which contributes to 20 billion products ending up in landfills annually, Rashmi leads a dynamic team of 8 engineers and nurses who have developed an innovative, 100% compostable menstrual pad that utilizes natural fibres derived from repurposed food and crop waste. This pioneering process diverts waste from landfills and is devoid of harmful PFAs and chemicals, offering a profound environmental impact.

A double threat as a UBC professor at just 26, her vision extends to revolutionizing diaper and medical PPE markets with compostable alternatives – and helping her students see the value of sustainability as being paramount in engineering design.





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Meet the Panelists

MARLA CALDER

Occupational Therapist
Stan Cassidy Centre for
Rehabilitation

Marla Calder has been a practicing occupational therapist for the past 25 years who has worked in the field of Assistive Technology for more than 19 years at the Stan Cassidy Centre for Rehabilitation in Fredericton, New Brunswick.

Marla assists clients with home environmental controls in the Smart Home Suite, ensuring access to digital content, wheelchair integration, research, and adapted video gaming.





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RACHELLE BERNIER

Rehabilitation Engineer
Stan Cassidy Centre for
Rehabilitation

Rachelle Bernier has an education in Biomedical Mechanical Engineering and has been working as a Rehabilitation Engineer at the Stan Cassidy Centre for Rehabilitation for 7 years.

Rachelle designs, creates and adapts new or existing assistive equipment and technology for people with disabilities.

Prior to working in the clinical rehab setting, Rachelle worked in the private sector providing engineering services for the manufacture of ambulances, emergency response, and accessibility vehicles, as well as for the manufacture of cell therapy related medical devices.

