Lachlan Forrow, MD
(last reviewed Jan 2026)



Lachlan Forrow, MD is a general internist, President Emeritus of The Albert Schweitzer Fellowship/USA,, past longtime faculty and Senior Fellow at the HMS Center for Bioethics, Senior Advisor to the National Center for Bioethics in Research and Health Care at Tuskegee Uiinversity, co-chair of the Harvard Heterodox Academy Campus Community, and active member of the Council on Academic Freedom at Harvard.

Dr. Forrow earned his A.B. (*summa cum laude* in Philosophy) from Princeton University in 1978 and his M.D. from Harvard Medical School (HMS) in 1983. After training in primary care internal medicine at Rhode Island Hospital/Brown University, he returned to HMS as a Faculty Development Fellow in General Internal Medicine, then as a Fellow in the Harvard University Program in Ethics and the Professions, then as a member of the Department of Medicine at Beth Israel Hospital (later Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center, "BIDMC"), Associate Professor of Medicine at HMS (1996-2020), and Faculty Associate of Harvard's Safra Center for Ethics (1990-present). He founded and served as longtime Director (1996-2020) of BIDMC Ethics Programs, and founded and served as Director (1998-2016) of BIDMC Palliative Care Programs.

As a senior HMS medical student in 1982, he spent three months in Africa as an Albert Schweitzer Fellow at the Albert Schweitzer Hospital in Lambaréné, Gabon, joining the Hospital's governing Council in 1994, and serving as its President 2010-2013, working with Gabon President Ali Bongo Ondimba, the Gabon Ministry of Health, and Management Sciences for Health (MSH) to develop a comprehensive national health system reform initiative.

As longtime President of The Albert Schweitzer Fellowship, Dr. Forrow led the 1991creation of the U.S. Schweitzer Fellows Programs, which support medical, nursing, public health, and other health professional students in direct service projects in local underserved communities. ASF today sponsors over 200 competitively-selected new U.S. Schweitzer Fellows annually in 12 local program sites, from over 100 participating medical and other health professional schools across the U.S., and supports a rapidly-growing network of over 4,000 program alumni -- "Schweitzer Fellows for Life", dedicated to, and supporting each other in, lifelong "Schweitzer-spirited" service.

Beginning as an HMS medical student in 1980, Dr. Forrow has been active for decades in the International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War (IPPNW), which was honored in 1985 with the Nobel Peace Prize, and IPPNW's U.S. affiliate, Physicians for Social Responsibility (PSR), including serving as IPPNW's Board Chair and as its Chief Executive Officer. In April 2007 he helped IPPNW launch ICAN – the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons – which received the 2017 Nobel Peace Prize, and remains actively involved in efforts to increase the probability that human civilization survives the nuclear weapons era.

Dr. Forrow has been a national leader in efforts to improve care near the end of life, including as a Faculty Scholar for the Project on Death in America, as Chair of the Massachusetts Expert Panel on End-of-Life Care (2009-2011), and as lead author on its landmark report *Patient-Centered Care and Human Mortality: The Urgency of Health System Reforms to Ensure Respect for Patients' Wishes and Accountability for Excellence in Care.* He served as senior physician adviser to The Conversation Project, and currently serves as Chair of the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH) Interdisciplinary Advisory Council on Palliative Care and Quality of Life, and as senior adviser to the Massachusetts Coalition for Serious Illness Care. He is a Coordinating Committee member of Dignity Alliance Massachusetts, a statewide network committed to achieving fundamental reforms in the provision of long-term services, support, and care for older adults and people with disability -- ensuring the dignity of those receiving the care as well as those providing it.

Dr. Forrow's published work has appeared in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, *New England Journal of Medicine*, and other leading journals, and in his blog for *The Boston Globe*, "Mortal Matters."

In 2007 Dr. Forrow was awarded a Lifetime Achievement Award for Community Service from Harvard Medical School. He was honored by the Massachusetts Medical Society with the 2016 Henry Ingersoll Bowditch Award for Excellence in Public Health, presented annually to "a Massachusetts physician who demonstrates creativity, commendable citizenship, initiative, innovation and leadership in the public health and advocacy fields."

Dr. Forrow and his wife Susan Reidy Forrow live in Newton, Massachusetts, and have four children: Melissa Reid Forrow (36), Aden Williams Forrow (34), Avery Burch Forrow (33), and Lauren Margaret Forrow (29), and two grandchildren, Alanna Beverly Forrow (17 months) and Ashe Reidy Zuber Forrow (5 months).

EXCERPTS FROM NARRATIVE REPORT FOR HMS CV
Lachlan Forrow, MD

Everything in my career in medicine has been anchored in my conviction that shared moral ideals and rigorous science together can overcome most of the problems that confront human beings, individually and collectively. My clinical, scholarly, teaching, and public engagement/advocacy activities have all grown out of this conviction, supporting individuals and organizations in taking their own idealism seriously, and translating it into concrete action that is both personally and professionally satisfying.

My work has focused primarily on four areas: the ethical dimensions of daily medical practice; improving care of patients near the end of life; reducing and one day eliminating injustices in health and health care for underserved individuals and communities, both in the U.S. and globally; and the social responsibilities of physicians and other health professionals, including in the prevention of nuclear war.

My choice of priority areas, and my approaches to them, have all been grounded in my undergraduate studies in Ethics at Princeton, as a Philosophy major and student of Professors Walter Kaufmann, Thomas Nagel, Paul Ramsey, and others, who taught me what it means to take moral responsibilities seriously, from the micro level of personal moral responsibilities to other individuals, to the macro level of social engagement. My subsequent work has been strongly shaped by: the post-college year I spent as a research assistant for Dr. Eric Cassell, a pioneer in the fields of medical ethics, the doctor-patient relationship, and end-of-life care; my years as the principal assistant to, and a lifelong student of, Dr. Bernard Lown, renowned clinical cardiologist, clinical educator, role model for science-based public engagement and advocacy, and co-founder of International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War; and my time as a senior medical student in Africa as an Albert Schweitzer Fellow in Lambarene, Gabon. Especially important has been my subsequent deep study of the life and thought of Dr. Albert Schweitzer, his philosophy/ethic of Reverence for all Life, and the power of his example to inspire others as they seek to lead meaningful lives that address important human problems, often finding the deepest personal satisfaction through direct service to others in need.

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For the remainder of my career, I am dedicating the majority of my work, through targeted mentoring, science-based public advocacy, and scholarly and other writing, to engaging and supporting younger people, especially physicians and other health-related professionals, and grassroots community members, in continuing, expanding, and further enhancing the kinds of work I have devoted my professional life to. My priorities are (1) ensuring that concerns about "health equity" and "racism" will be translated into tangible, enduring, and transformational systemic change and (2) increasing the likelihood that human civilization survives the twin existential threats of nuclear war and climate change. I hope to support growing numbers of younger people in figuring out how to thrive personally while they make their own creative and deeply-satisfying contributions to ensuring that the future of medicine, defined in the broadest sense, is solidly anchored in a combination of uncompromising idealism and rigorous science, including the science of operational effectiveness, so that one day we will ensure the highest standards of health and health care for ALL people.

I can be reached at Lforrow@gmail.com Please make it clear in the subject line why you are contacting me, and if my responding to your message is time-sensitive. If you are someone who already knows me well, and know someone you think I should try to be helpful to, please encourage them to contact me with a subject line of "[Your Name] suggested we connect…" Or connect with me on bluesky @lachlanforrow.bsky.social and/or LinkedIn