

2026 SCD Symposium Agenda

Theme: *Healing Beyond Medicine: The Role of Music, Mental Health, and Nutrition in Sickle Cell Disease Care*

Date: Thursday, September 10, 2026

Location: NYU Grossman School of Medicine, Schwartz Lecture Hall E, 530 1st Avenue, New York, NY

In Partnership With:

- Adekunle Gold Foundation
- Food and Nutrition Education in Communities Program (FNEC), Cornell University
- Institute for Excellence in Health Equity (IEHE), NYU Grossman School of Medicine
- Music and Audio Research Laboratory (MARL), NYU Steinhardt
- Implementing Sustainable Evidence-based Interventions through Engagement (ISEE) Lab, NYU School of Global Public Health

Registration & Welcome

8:30 – 9:00 AM

- Check-in
- Light breakfast

Opening Remarks

9:00 – 9:50 AM

Welcome and symposium overview

- Welcome Remarks
- SCD overview (Acknowledgment of patients, caregivers, clinicians, and community partners)
- SCD and the confluence of music therapy and health promotion
- SCD as a whole-person condition (biological, psychological, social, and cultural dimensions)
- Additional opening Remarks

Featured Speakers

- **John P. Leonard, MD**
Laura and Isaac Perlmutter Professor of Hematology and Medical Oncology; Division Chief, Hematology and Medical Oncology; Department of Medicine at NYU Grossman School of Medicine
- **Emmanuel Peprah, PhD**
Associate Professor of Global and Environmental Health, NYUSGPH; Principal Investigator, Implementing Sustainable Evidence-based interventions through Engagement (ISEE) Lab; NYU School of Global Public Health
- **Carlos Chirinos-Espin, PhD**
Assistant Professor and Director of NYU Music and Social Change Lab. Music and Audio Research Laboratory; NYU Steinhardt

- **Gbenga Ogedegbe, MD, MPH**
Dr. Adolph and Margaret Berger Professor of Medicine and Population Health; Director, Institute for Excellence in Health Equity; NYU Grossman School of Medicine,
 - **Elise Cappella**
Vice Provost for University-wide Initiatives and Graduate Education
Professor of Applied Psychology and Vice Dean for Research, NYU Steinhardt
Co-Director, Institute of Education Sciences Predoctoral Interdisciplinary Research Training (IES-PIRT)
 - **NYU Deans**
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Session I: Music as Medicine

9:50 – 10:50 AM

Panel Moderator – Carlos Chirinos-Espin, PhD, Assistant Professor and Director of NYU Music and Social Change Lab. NYU Steinhardt

Discussion Topics:

- The science of music therapy in chronic pain and stress regulation
- Music in health promotion and behavior change
- Lived experiences: how music supports coping, identity, and resilience

Key Takeaway: Music as a low-cost, scalable, and culturally grounded adjunct to SCD care

Break

10:50 – 11:00 AM

Session II: Mental Health, Trust, and Trauma in SCD

11:00 – 11:50 AM

Panel Moderator – Tanya Spruill, PhD, Associate Professor of Population Health and Medicine. NYU Grossman School of Medicine; NYU Langone Institute for Excellence in Health Equity

Discussion Topics:

- Depression, anxiety, and medical trauma among individuals with SCD
- The role of stigma, bias, and medical mistrust in care-seeking and early discharge
- Community-based and peer-led mental health models

Key Takeaway: Mental health is not ancillary—it is foundational to SCD outcomes

Lunch & Community Conversation

11:50 AM – 1:00 PM

- Nutritious lunch aligned with SCD dietary needs
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Session III: Nutrition, Inflammation, and Energy Balance

1:00 – 1:50 PM

Panel Moderator – Angela Odoms-Young, PhD, The Nancy Schlegel Meinig Associate Professor of Maternal and Child Nutrition. Cornell University; Director of the Food and Nutrition Education in Communities Program (FNEC) and New York State Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP)

Discussion Topics:

- Nutrition, inflammation, anemia, and pain in SCD
- Food insecurity, SES, and access to culturally appropriate nutrition
- Practical guidance: what patients *can* do within real-world constraints

Key Takeaway: Nutrition is a modifiable, equity-sensitive lever for improving quality of life

Break

1:50 – 2:00 PM

Session IV: Integrating Music, Mental Health, and Nutrition into SCD Care

2:00 – 2:50 PM

Panel Moderators

- **Carlos Chirinos-Espin, PhD**, NYU Steinhardt
- **Emmanuel Peprah, PhD**, NYU School of Global Public Health

Discussion Topics:

- Using music and entertainment for public health engagement

Key Takeaway: Intersection of music, mental health, and nutrition to improve quality of life

Break & Group Photos

2:50 – 3:00 PM

Session V: Integrating Music, Mental Health, and Nutrition into SCD Care

3:00 – 3:40 PM

Panel Moderator

- **Olugbenga Ogedegbe, MD, MPH**, NYU Grossman School of Medicine

Discussion Topics:

- Explore how music, mental health, and nutrition can be incorporated into routine SCD care to improve pain management, emotional well-being, nutrition, and quality of life.
- Identify practical strategies for embedding evidence-based and emerging approaches into multidisciplinary SCD care across diverse clinical settings.
- Discuss how to address challenges related to access, health equity, workforce capacity, patient engagement, reimbursement, and sustainability.

Key Takeaway: Healing beyond medicine requires implementation: Transforming SCD outcomes means integrating music, mental health, and nutrition into equitable, person-centered, and sustainable clinical care.

Closing Plenary: Centering Joy, Dignity, and Quality of Life

3:40 – 4:30 PM

- Role of community-based organizations
 - Reflections from patients and caregivers
 - Call to action for clinicians, researchers, policymakers, and advocates
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Networking & Resource Sharing

4:30 – 5:30 PM

- Community resources
- Mental health and nutrition toolkits
- Research and advocacy opportunities