Dr. Burke Harris is an award-winning physician, researcher, and advocate dedicated to changing the way our society responds to one of the most serious, expensive, and widespread public health crises of our time: childhood trauma. She was appointed as California’s first-ever Surgeon General by Governor Gavin Newsom in January 2019.

Dr. Burke Harris’ career has been dedicated to serving vulnerable communities and combating the root causes of health disparities. After completing her residency at Stanford, she founded a clinic in one of San Francisco’s most underserved communities, Bayview Hunters Point. It was there that Burke Harris observed that, despite the implementation of national best practices for immunizations, asthma, obesity treatment, and other preventive health measures, her patients still faced outsized risks for poor health, development, and behavioral outcomes.

Drawing in research from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and Kaiser Permanente, Dr. Burke Harris identified Adverse Childhood Experiences as a major risk factor affecting the health of her patients. In 2011, she founded the Center for Youth Wellness and subsequently grew the organization to be a national leader in the effort to advance pediatric medicine, raise public awareness, and transform the way society responds to children exposed to Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACES) and toxic stress. She also founded and led the Bay Area Research Consortium on Toxic Stress and Health, to advance scientific screening and treatment of toxic stress.

She currently serves as a member of the American Academy of Pediatrics’ National Advisory Board for Screening and on the Committee on Applying Neurobiological and Socio-behavioral Sciences from Prenatal through Early Childhood Development: A Health Equity Approach for the National Academy of Medicine.

Her work has been profiled in best-selling books including How Children Succeed by Paul Tough and Hillbilly Elegy by J.D. Vance as well as in Jamie Redford’s feature film, Resilience. It has also been featured on NPR, CNN, and Fox News as well as in USA Today and The New York Times. Dr. Burke Harris’ TED Talk, “How Childhood Trauma Affects Health Across the Lifetime,” has been viewed almost 5 million times. Her book The Deepest Well: Healing the Long-Term Effects of Childhood Adversity was called “indispensable” by The New York Times.

Dr. Burke Harris is the recipient of the Arnold P. Gold Foundation Humanism in Medicine Award presented by the American Academy of Pediatrics and the Heinz Award for the Human Condition. She was named one of 2018’s Most Influential Women in Business by the San Francisco Business Times.
Rudene Di Carlo came to Stanford University in July 1991 to begin her residency training in pediatrics. Only weeks earlier, as she was graduating from medical school at Tulane University, she had been diagnosed with chronic myelogenous leukemia. Thus began her extraordinary odyssey of strength and courage as a pediatric resident. Along the way, she taught her colleagues and her mentors countless lessons about living, caring, healing, loving, and dying. Throughout her residency, while bearing the burden of her own illness, Rudene exhibited unparalleled competence and warmth as she cared for children and their families. Such was her grace and cheer that those who were unaware of her illness would never suspect a problem. Unfailingly, she placed her patients first, always considering their every need.

Rudene was one of the finest pediatric residents ever to train at Stanford University. A gifted and intelligent physician, Rudene above all was a compassionate and selfless human being. Exuding enthusiasm and vivacity, she was never bitter or resentful. Rudene shared the joy of others’ accomplishments and experiences that she would never know; her heart was always large enough to open to others whose misfortunes were small compared to her own.

Rudene Di Carlo died on April 17, 1995 at the age of 32. Through her example, Rudene helped those with whom she worked to become better caregivers. This lectureship is established by Rudene’s friends and family in her honor, to perpetuate her extraordinary compassion and sensitivity in the care of children.

A few weeks before her death, Rudene Di Carlo agreed to share the story of her diagnosis, illness, and medical care by recording a video to be used in the teaching program at Stanford University Medical School. In this video recording, she spoke of keeping her diagnosis a complete secret for several months, not wanting to jeopardize her work. She described finally telling her closest friends about her illness and the importance of their support. When asked about the lessons she took back to work with her after her first hospitalization, Rudene shared her insights. “Simple things, really,” she said...

- “Sit down when you talk with patients.”
- “Wear a name tag. Identify yourself.”
- “See your patients every day.”
- “Never underestimate the importance of touching the patient. Rather than talking at the patient from across the room, come close, reach out, and talk with the patient.”
- “Involve the patient in decision making.”
- “Keep promises. If you say you’re going to call, you call!”
- “You must follow through. Too many times a doctor will promise to do something or look something up. The patient remembers. The words of the physician are so potent, it’s unbelievable! The patient will remember.”
- “Be considerate of the family. The patient is someone’s child.”

Rudene helped us all to better understand illness from the patient’s perspective. In doing so, she helped us all to become better caregivers.