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**Category:** Education

**Workshop Title:** Mentorship and Empowerment: Bridging the Gender Gap in Rehabilitation Research, Engineering, and Practice

**Organizer(s):** Sangeetha Madhavan

**Speaker(s):** Madhavan, Sangeetha, UIC, USA

Spieß, Martina, ZHAW School of Health Sciences, Switzerland

O'Brien, Megan, Shirley Ryan Ability Lab, USA

Trejos, Ana Luisa, Western University, Canada

**Workshop Time:** 08:15 - 09:45

**Attendee Engagement:** Panelist-participants round table, Live polling, Facilitated small group breakouts, interactive mentorship map, Q&A with structured prompts

**Abstract:** As more women enter fields of rehabilitation research, engineering, and practice, it is crucial to offer gender-based guidance to navigate challenges and foster career growth. In this interactive roundtable, a diverse panel of women professionals—including clinicians, engineers, scientists, and academics—will share their unique career journeys, highlighting both successes and the gender-specific obstacles they have encountered. We will explore the importance of mentoring and supporting women across these fields, emphasizing how building strong networks of senior and peer mentors is essential for professional growth.

Gender disparities persist in healthcare and engineering, especially in leadership roles. For example, women make up about 70% of the global healthcare workforce, yet hold only 25% of senior roles. In engineering, the gender gap is even more stark—only 15% of engineers are women, and they are underrepresented in leadership roles across the field. These statistics underscore the need for systemic support for women as they pursue professional growth, seek mentorship, and confront gender biases in their respective careers.

This session will also explore how gender influences clinical, diagnostic, and therapeutic approaches in neurorehabilitation and engineering-based healthcare solutions. We will provide practical communication tools and strategies for women to build strong mentorship and sponsorship networks, and discuss the importance of paying it forward by mentoring other women.

Participants will have the opportunity to engage in small group discussions with each speaker and are encouraged to bring their questions or share personal experiences regarding gender-based challenges and successes. This workshop extends beyond those who identify as women, welcoming non-binary individuals, men, and anyone committed to supporting gender equality and women's empowerment. We recognize the value of diverse voices in driving positive change for all genders.