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Dr. Nielsen is a nationally recognized authority in medicine and an outspoken advocate for the uninsured and affordable health insurance for all Americans. She is a sought-after media commentator on issues of public health, physician responsibility, the need for high quality health care, the coronavirus pandemic and emerging infectious diseases.

A past president of the American Medical Association, she served for two years as senior advisor in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services where she helped design alternative physician payment systems. For eight years she directed the Buffalo office of the NYS Department of Health Office of Professional Medical Conduct. She has been a board member of numerous stakeholder organizations, including the National Patient Safety Foundation and the National Quality Forum. Dr. Nielsen currently serves on the board of Hospice Buffalo, Catholic Charities and the Institute for Health Care Ethics, and previously she was chief medical officer for Independent Health and a board member for Great Lakes Health.

She is an elected member of the National Academy of Medicine, considered one of the highest honors in the fields of health and medicine.