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Dr. Wharton joined CDC as an Epidemic Intelligence Service Officer in 1986 and was assigned to the Tennessee Department of Health and Environment in Nashville, TN. She joined CDC's immunization program in 1992, and since that time has held a variety of positions. From 2006 to 2013 she served as Deputy Director of the National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases. In December 2013 she became the Director.

Dr. Wharton received her medical degree from Harvard Medical School and Masters in Public Health from Johns Hopkins School of Hygiene and Public Health. She completed her training in internal medicine at the University of Michigan and her infectious diseases training at the Duke University Medical Center, in Durham, North Carolina.