



# Women's Health Update

Women's Health  
Center of Excellence  
Wake Forest University  
School of Medicine

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## Overview: Research Focusing on Gender Differences and Women's Health

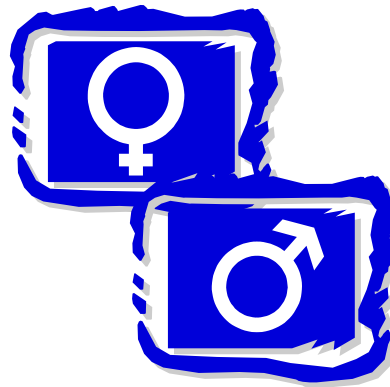
The study of sex and gender differences in health and well-being can provide a better understanding of the incidence, presentation and severity of diseases (thus promoting improved prevention and care of both men and women), as well as clarify underlying biological mechanisms. The Institute of Medicine Task Force on the NIH's Women's Health Research Agenda for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century recommends the support and conduct of interdisciplinary research on sex differences to help reduce the potential for inequitable discrimination based on sex differences.<sup>1</sup> In response to and in support of this expanded sex/gender perspective, The Women's Health Center of Excellence at Wake Forest University will promote research initiatives on gender differences and women's health.

The following specific definitions of sex and gender will guide our efforts: **Sex** is the general classification of human or non-human animals as male or female, according to the reproductive organs and

functions that derive from the chromosomal complement. **Gender** is a person's self-representation as male or female, or how that person is responded to by social institutions based on the individual's gender presentation. Gender is rooted in biology and shaped by environment and experience.

Sex and gender comparisons are important factors to include in research designs. Pinn<sup>2</sup> describes how a better understanding of these comparisons has been documented or is under study in many specific health areas (e.g., HIV/AIDS, response to pain and pain therapies, type 2 diabetes, irritable bowel syndrome, smoking cessation strategies, musculoskeletal or autoimmune diseases, depression, weight patterns, and caregiving's effects on caregivers).

Our Center intends to collaborate on initiatives focusing on gender/sex differences as well as pursuing investigations specific to women's health. The contents of this issue provide a sampling of some of these initiatives.



The Research Support Core will continue to provide support for researchers interested in women's health, expanding its commitment to biomedical researchers interested in issues of sex and gender.

We are determined to help keep Wake Forest University at the forefront of medical research. The Women's Center will continue to fulfill its mission and be responsive to WFUSM's strategic plan for the future.

— **Claudine Legault, Ph.D.**  
Director, WHCoE

### References

<sup>1</sup> Wizemann TM, Pardue M-L, eds. Exploring the Biological Contributions to Human Health: Does Sex Matter? Washington, DC: National Academy Press, 2001.

<sup>2</sup> Pinn VW. Sex and gender factors in medical studies. Implications for health and clinical practice. JAMA 2003;289:397-400.

### Inside this issue:

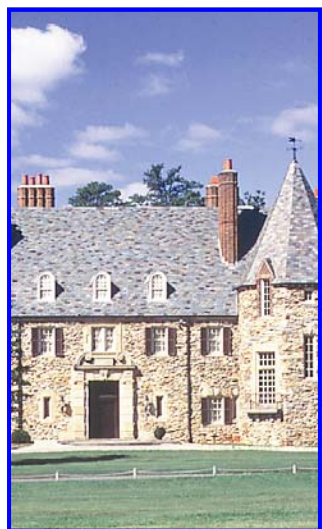
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### Women's Health Center of Excellence

WFUSM  
2000 West First Street  
Piedmont Plaza II, Suite 101  
Winston-Salem, NC 27104

Phone: 336-713-4220  
Fax: 336-713-4228  
Email: [whcoe@wfubmc.edu](mailto:whcoe@wfubmc.edu)

**We're also on the Web!**  
Visit us at  
[www.wfubmc.edu/women](http://www.wfubmc.edu/women)



Above: The Graylyn International Conference Center, site of the WFUSM Graylyn Conferences on Women's Health.

## 9th Annual Graylyn Conference Focused on Issues Concerning Women's Cognitive Health

In the wake of the WHI findings related to hormone therapy and dementia, the focus of this year's 9<sup>th</sup> annual Graylyn Conference on women's cognitive health was especially timely. The event, held October 29-31, received funding from both NIH and industry sources. Attendees came from 24 different institutions, as well as from industry, the NIH, and private practice.

The meeting agenda covered diverse areas of interest in cognition research, such as mechanistic considerations, epidemiologic reports, advances in treatment, refinements in diagnostic criteria, and imaging technology and its potential clinical applications for cognitive assessments. A lively panel discussion centered on how to reconcile the data from randomized clinical trials with those from earlier observational studies.

The conference kicked off with a keynote talk by Bernadine Healy, M.D., former NIH director and now a columnist at *U.S. News and World Report*. Dr. Healy also chaired a panel discussion on "Implications for Women's Cognitive Health".

We received support from the Alzheimer's Association to fund the attendance of seven junior faculty or trainees from WFUSM. Nominees were solicited from center directors, chairs, training program directors, and other senior faculty. The following were selected to attend the conference: from OB/GYN: Alicia Aleman, M.D.; from Pathology/Comparative Medicine, Susan Appt, D.V.M. ; from Internal Medicine/ Gerontology: Hal Atkinson, M.D. , Aloha Bryson, M.D. , Stephanie Freeman, M.D., and Kesi Kindle, M.D.; and from Neurobiol-

ogy & Anatomy, Greg Tinkler, M.S.

Winners of the two \$500 awards for the best junior faculty and student posters were chosen by conference participants. Catherine Buchanan, M.D. (Internal Medicine/ Gerontology, WFUSM) received the junior faculty award for "Association of Walking Speed with Cognitive Performance in Non-Demented Adults Aged ≥ 75 Years". The "Best Student Poster" award went to Kathryn Tweedy, M.S. (Medical University of South Carolina) for "Emotional Memory Processing: An Investigation of the Role of Gender, Hormones and Affect in Memory for Emotional Stimuli".

Our thanks to the speakers, award winners, and attendees for their enthusiastic participation in this highly successful conference.

*"Breastfeeding is the most cost-effective, health-promoting, and disease-preventing activity new mothers can perform."*

— Dennis, 2002; quoted in WHCoE's newly funded breastfeeding grant

## Grant to Evaluate Breastfeeding Program Funded

The Center recently won a 1-year grant from the CDC/National Association for Teachers of Preventive Medicine for its proposal entitled "Evaluation of a Peer-Counseling Model for Breastfeeding" (Claudine Legault, PI). The Center will work with the Forsyth County Depart-

ment of Public Health to evaluate its breastfeeding educational program called "Best Beginnings," an innovative peer-counseling program that promotes breastfeeding among low-income women in Forsyth County. Long-term objectives – to be carried out with the County Health

Department and with Forsyth Hospital – are to investigate how this program could be improved, expanded, and possibly replicated in other communities. WFUSM co-investigators on the project are Roger Anderson, Ph.D., and Kim Wagoner, M.P.H.





## Fall Social Brings Together Women Faculty

The Center held its Fall Social on October 7, 2003 to welcome Kristy Woods, MD, the new Director of the Maya Angelou Research Center on Minority Health, and to introduce new faculty members to the Center. About 40 faculty members attended, including 10 new Ph.D and M.D. faculty who have joined clinical and basic science departments. The Social serves to foster

relationships between junior and senior faculty and to help faculty investigators identify those with common interests in other departments. The informal setting facilitates these goals and permits more individual interactions.

Dr. Woods commented, "When you're a new member of the faculty, it's difficult to begin the networking process again when you move to

another institution. This event was a terrific way to meet more of my women colleagues at the Medical Center, and I'm looking forward to more collaborations with the women I've met tonight and with the Center in the future."

Our thanks to Dr. Virginia Nichols for graciously opening her home to her colleagues and hosting the social.



Participants at the fall social, caught while socializing.

## "Breaking the Glass Ceiling" Panel Addresses Challenges of an Academic Career for Women

On October 29, the Center sponsored an informative and entertaining panel on "Successful Women in Academia and Beyond: Breaking the Glass Ceiling." Fifty-five WFUSM faculty attended this event, which emphasized the challenges encountered by women on their paths towards advancement in aca-

demia. The panelists included Bernadine Healy, M.D., former NIH director and Dean, Ohio State University School of Medicine, and Nananda Col, M.D. (Harvard). From WFUSM, Sally Shumaker, PhD (Assoc. Dean, Faculty Services), Claudine Legault, PhD (Center Director), and Dean William Apple-

gate participated. After the discussion, it was clear that "How do I find my way?" is a question common to women faculty. Seen as key: taking advantage of mentoring, networking, and professional leadership and career coaching opportunities that can help arm women to break the glass ceiling.



A full house got great advice and insiders' tips on how to navigate the challenges of an academic career.

## Update on Our Leadership and Mentoring Programs

Our Mentoring Program for women junior faculty links women junior faculty (e.g., instructor or assistant professor) with women and men at the senior faculty level (associate and full professor), with the goal of promoting career advancement of women faculty. We currently have 23 jun-

ior faculty and 44 senior faculty participants. Joining the program is easy! Contact Natalie Barrett ([nbarrett@wfubmc.edu](mailto:nbarrett@wfubmc.edu)) for details.

We've initiated a new book club, where both mentors and mentees will gather to discuss books relevant for career development and continued

professional growth.

Look for details on a March 30 visit by *Dr. Valerie Williams*, Associate Dean for Faculty Affairs, Univ. of Oklahoma College of Medicine. Dr. Williams will present a workshop for senior faculty on effective mentoring. Also in the works: a visit from *Dr. Sharon Turner*, Dean of

the Univ. of Kentucky College of Dentistry, who will address leadership issues.

Our Program keeps materials on mentoring and leadership at the [Center's Resource Library](#) and Resource Center at PP II, Suite 101. The library can be viewed at [www.wfubmc.edu/women/whcoe\\_mentoring.htm](http://www.wfubmc.edu/women/whcoe_mentoring.htm).



## Events on the Horizon

### February is American Heart Month

This month, the focus is on heart disease education and prevention, especially in women. February 21 is "Women's Heart Day," and earlier in the month, the NHLBI's "Red Dress" campaign to promote awareness of women and heart disease came to Winston-Salem on Febru-

ary 7, with a series of events at Hanes Mall. Best Health hosted educational seminars, cooking classes, and free screenings for body fat analysis and body mass index measurements. A fashion show featured several volunteers from WFUBMC's Mended Hearts support group

wearing red apparel from Belk's. The event was co-sponsored by BestHealth, the Heart Center, and Women's Health of WFUBMC. The pin created to symbolize the campaign is shown at right. For more information, visit the URL shown in the caption.



Above: The Red Dress pin, promoting awareness of heart disease in women. Learn more at: <http://www.hearttruth.gov>

### Annual Triathlon Helps Combat Domestic Violence in Our Community: May 22, 2004

Save the date for the [2004 Excellence Triathlon](#) scheduled for Saturday, May 22 on the WFU Reynolda Campus. At right are some photos from the

the last Triathlon, where early rain didn't dampen the spirits of racers or volunteers. Since 1998, our annual Triathlon and raised over \$100,000 to

support domestic violence awareness education and training in our community. The need is always there — stay tuned for more on the 2004 Tri!



### Research Seminar Series is Back!

Here are our seminars for 2004, all in Sticht Center Auditorium at noon:

**March 3:** Joseph Grzywacz, Ph.D., WFUSM: "Women's Work-Family Experiences and Health During Pregnancy: Pilot Results from a Modified Diary Design";

**April 7:** Alison Snow Jones, Ph.D., WFUSM: "Overview of Intimate Partner Violence";

**May 4:** Scott MacDiarmid, M.D., WFUSM: "What's New in the Treatment of Overactive Bladder".

Lunch will be served at each seminar. We hope to see you all there.

### Research Workshops Continue

Our popular Research Workshops continue with these offerings:

**March 18:** "A Guide to Foundation Grants"

**April 8:** "Insiders' Scoop on Reviews" (NIH Study Section Panel)

All are held in Commons 2-3, and refreshments will be served. Our 3-hour workshops have a registration fee, but the panel on April 8 is free. The workshops are facilitated by Karen Klein, Research Associate in our Center and an experienced workshop presenter. For more information, see our web site [http://www.wfubmc.edu/women/whcoe\\_grantworkshops.htm](http://www.wfubmc.edu/women/whcoe_grantworkshops.htm).

### In Our Next Issue

- Get to Know About the Research Support Core
- Update: the 2004 Excellence Triathlon
- A Tour Through Our Website
- The "Funding Web": A Center Service for WFUSM Researchers
- ... and more!