

Women In Medicine & Science

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WOMEN IN MEDICINE & SCIENCE FACULTY ORGANIZATION

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The *Women in Medicine & Science Update* is published biannually by the *Women in Medicine & Science Faculty Organization* at the Medical College of Virginia Campus of Virginia Commonwealth University in an effort to expand communication and to promote issues effecting University Women in Medicine and Science.

The *Women in Medicine & Science Faculty Organization* gladly welcomes questions or comments. E-mail may be sent to wemo@mail2.vcu.edu Additional inquiries may be directed to Joann N. Bodurtha, M.D., MPH. at (804) 828-9632 or Maia A. Eckler, M.S. at (804) 828-5161

PRESIDENT'S PIECE

by Joann N. Bodurtha, MD, MPH

"No one can expect a life free of troubles, some of our own making, some quite literally, misfortune. But it is how we deal with these troubles that reveals who we are."

-Sue Hubbell

I am writing this piece on vacation, not out of obsession with VCU but because the less structured time of vacation gives me time to reflect. I ask each of you reading this to think of your last vacation. Were you reconnecting with distant family, swimming on new or familiar beaches, or relaxing without wake-up alarms, beepers, voicemail, faxes, and e-mail?

I remember a now-retired colleague telling me once that she knew a vacation was providing the needed break when she forgot that she was a doctor. It is often a period when we are spending more time in other roles: friend, partner, daughter, mother, fellow adventurer. Some speak of balance; others of flow. How do we bring together all the pieces of our lives, our upbringing, our training, and the ongoing lives that touch us?

P. D. James wrote in *Time to be in Earnest*, "The cells of my body must have renewed themselves countless times since that 11-year old walked around Ludlow Castle carrying so carefully the letter which would open to her the delights and opportunities of a high-school education. I inhabit a different body, but I can reach back over nearly seventy years and recognize her as

myself. Then I walked in hope – and I do still."

We learn a lot about life, joy, and sorrow in the years following the receipt of a remarkable medical or graduate school admission letter. We evolve our own ways of connecting, listening, surviving, giving, and healing.

A loon breaks through the water and startles our daughter on her first solo kayak ride across the New Hampshire pond. We reconnect with my longest friend whose eighty year-old mother died this spring. We share deep laughs taking turns sitting in her mother's old Lazy-Gal, while commanding the other to get food, magazines, and the cat. We make pleasure and time for simple things.

But it is vacation time, and the complexity of being a doctor beckons. Our individual journeys as doctors and scientists do add up to something. It is hard and painful so many times, but we compose our lives around what we value. I would like a good doctor to be there when I need one, and so we journey back and address the complicated world.

Let us make the most of the time we have together.

The Women in Medicine & Science Faculty Organization at the Medical College of Virginia Campus of Virginia Commonwealth University has a new, extensive site now available on the world wide web:

WWW.WOMENINMEDICINE.VCU.EDU

BICKEL PRESENTS AT SURGERY GRAND ROUNDS *by Maia A. Eckler, MS***"Eye of the Beholder: Addressing Gender Differences & Stereotypes in Medicine"**

"Why do we *still* need to concentrate on women in medicine?" Janet Bickel, a nationally known expert in the subject of women in medicine, posed this question early during her presentation at Surgery Grand Rounds at VCU.

It's a good question, and groups and speakers who represent women physicians and scientists field it often. Outwardly it appears as though the "issue" of women in the medical profession is rapidly becoming a non-issue. Every year the number of women applicants to U.S. medical schools rises, and 46% of med school classes are now female. But the fact remains that the proportion of distribution between women and men in the ranks at academic medical centers has changed very little in the *last 20 years*.

Less than 11% of women in academic medicine will reach the level of full professor. "We are living in a half-changed world," said Bickel, "There are lots of opportunities, but there is not a level playing field."

Bickel, the Associate Vice President of Institutional Planning and Development for the Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC) in Washington, DC entitled her talk: "Eye of the Beholder: Addressing Gender Differences and Stereotypes in Medicine." The "beholder" refers to the personal nature of our perceptions, and takes the place of the controversial buzz word "sexism." Bickel said she disliked using the term "sexism" because in the current climate, sexist practices and behavior are often unintentional. "People believe that they are being fair," said Bickel, just before she began to illustrate the most common practices of "unfairness" that women in academic medicine face on a daily basis.

Describing the plight of a "constant double bind," Bickel cited several studies that illustrate how women are too often their own worst enemy. Women tend to devalue their own work and work against, rather than with, each other. One of the most puzzling examples of this behavior can be found in the treatment of women nurses towards their physician counterparts. Women physicians often have difficulties gaining the respect and help of female nurses; a respect that is intrinsically given if the doctor in question is a man.

Women also tend to see their suggestions ignored continually in meetings only to be implemented at a later time after a male makes the same recommendation. Another example of the double-bind was represented when Bickel offered quotes from letters of recommendation written to the Executive Leadership and Academic Medicine Program for Women (ELAM) Admissions committee. "Can you imagine someone writing this about a man?" Bickel asked the audience before proceeding to read a department chair's letter that described the candidate in question as being "too driven"....but fortunately had a good and supportive husband to balance her unreasonable ambitions.

To begin to level the playing field, Bickel briefly reviewed the new recommendations of the AAMC Increasing Women Leadership Committee and praised the VCU Women in Medicine and Science Faculty organization for their leadership and energy. "Only 13% of medical schools have a women faculty organization...and you have one of the best, in terms of longevity, activity and integration into the life of the community."

Janet Bickel's presentation may be viewed on-line in streaming video (Realplayer plug-in required). To access the presentation, log on to the VCU Surgery home page (www.surgery.vcu.edu) and follow the link that reads "Grand Rounds, Conferences and CME Credit." Surgery Grand Rounds are held on the MCV Campus in George Ben Johnston Auditorium on Thursdays 7:00 a.m. - 8:00 a.m. Thanks to the Department of Surgery for bringing Bickel to our campus as a guest speaker.

**'Young Women in Medicine' Day Exposes Students to Careers--
Teen-agers Tour MCV Campus and Hear from Women Physicians***by Michael Ford
University News Services*

Although women outnumber men in the current class of second-year medical students, VCU's Women in Medicine student program is continuing its push to recruit female students for a career in medicine. Recently the program hosted 88 female high school students from across the state for a full day of activities that included tours of MCV Campus facilities and talks with several female faculty members.

Most of the "Young Women in Medicine" high school conferees expressed an interest in medicine or some other health care field. During their visit, female physicians and medical students encouraged the teens to consider medicine as a possible career.

"These girls are high-school juniors and seniors and at the point in their lives when they are starting to decide what college they'll go to and what they'll major in, and what they'll want to do for the rest of their lives," said Nira Colyn, a third-year VCU medical student and conference organizer. "This visit will give them an idea of what it takes to go into the health sciences. We're hoping to encourage more girls towards a career in medicine."

VCU's Michelle Whitehurst-Cook, M.D., Associate Professor of Family Practice Medicine and director of the SOM admissions committee, told students what the committee looks for in a medical school applicant. And a panel of five VCU doctors talked about what makes a good physician.

"It shows them what they can do with their lives. It shows them they can have a dream and that other people before them have had dreams and followed through with them," said Jennifer Collins, a second-year VCU medical student and conference organizer. "This conference also establishes for these girls the idea of a mentoring program and shows how valuable that can be."

The attendees learned about the rigors and routines of medical school from 35 VCU medical students who answered questions while sharing an informal lunch in the Larrick Student Center. Faculty and student interested in participating in this year's YWIMD may contact Dr. Cynthia Heldberg at (804) 828-9629 or write to <cynthia.heldberg@vcu.edu>.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

10th Annual Women in Medicine & Science Pathways to Leadership Conference

The Annual Women in Medicine Pathways to Leadership Conference will be held **Friday, March 1, 2002**, at The Historic **Jefferson Hotel in Richmond, Virginia**.

This year marks the 10th anniversary of the VCU School of Medicine WIMS program presenting this professional development opportunity, the 5th year for combined sponsorship with the University of Virginia SOM and Eastern Virginia Medical School, and the 4th year of the Medical Society of Virginia and Richmond Academy of Medicine.

This program, designed to promote professional development through enhancement of leadership skills, welcomes community practitioners, academicians, administrators, other health care professionals, medical and graduate students, residents and community leaders. Both women and men in medicine and science will gain skills that will enhance personal growth and advance careers. In addition, the conference provides an opportunity to network with other professionals and share advice and experience. We sincerely hope you will join us for this unique opportunity.

For additional information, please visit the VCU Office of Continuing Medical Education on the World Wide Web:

www.medschool.vcu.edu/cme/calendar.html

or write to: cmeinfo@vcu.edu

or phone Conference Manager Carole Hetteema at 804/828-3640

RICHMOND ACADEMY OF MEDICINE, INC



Women In Focus

Women physicians constitute over 30% of the local physician market, yet, despite these impressive advances, women physicians face obstacles in the workplace and in the home. To acknowledge these obstacles and to work toward solutions to complex, cultural issues, the Richmond Academy offers a Women in Focus Section (WIF). WIF currently has over 75 physician members and continues to grow. The Section meets three times annually to discuss innovative ways and new solutions to address workplace, home, and health issues. Some recent discussion topics have included: "Breast Reconstruction Menopause and Peri-Menopause," "Medicine in Russia," and "Your Hot Hormones."

Through its growing network of concerned professionals, the Women in Focus Section helps women in medicine by advocating for women and women's healthcare issues. Annually, the Section focuses on legislative issues of concern to women and is a co-sponsor of the Annual Pathways to Leadership Conference, a symposium that brings together women professionals statewide to enhance the role of women physicians. The three medical schools (VCU, UVA, and EVMS) are the primary leaders in this annual symposium.

We invite you to be a part of our team! WIF is open to physicians and medical students interested in the advancement of women! For more information contact RAM at 804-643-6631; or email Judy Chin, MD, President of WIF at <ChinJL@aol.com> Applications and other information may be obtained at the RAM website: WWW.RAMDOCS.ORG

WOMEN'S HEALTH

2002

**Clinical Insights for the Practitioner
The Williamsburg Marriott Hotel
Williamsburg, VA
April 19-21, 2002**

*Presented by the
VCU Institute for Women's Health and the
VCU Office of Continuing Medical Education*

This program is designed to provide physicians, nurses and other healthcare professionals with an update of topics relevant to women's health

**For further information contact
Carolyn Stone, Conference Manager
804/828-3640 or 800/413-2872 or visit
www.womenshealth.vcu.edu/wh2002/**

ANNOUNCEMENTS & RESOURCES**THE MEDICAL SOCIETY OF VIRGINIA***Representing Virginia Physicians and Patients Since 1820***Women Physicians' Section Website**
<http://www.msv.org/>

The mission of the Women Physicians' Section is to promote women physicians' professional issues, to provide input from women physicians in the decision-making process of the organization, to increase the number of leadership positions held by women physicians within the MSV and to increase the membership of women physicians within the Society. All female physicians who are members of the MSV are automatically members of the Women Physicians' Section. If you are not a member of the Society, please join now to see what a difference membership can make. The MSV Women Physicians' Section has links and resources to help you explore matters pertaining to women in medicine including:

- Committee Participation Opportunities
- Informational Links & Recommended Reading (members only)
- Library of Articles on Womens Issues (members only)
- Listserv Discussion Group (members only)
- Meetings and Events
- Member Benefit Programs and Services (members only)
- Newsletter - MSVW: Practical Perspectives for Female Physicians

An MSV Member ID # is required to access the "members only" section of the website - current members may email The MSV Director of Membership, Jennifer Hedge at <jhedge@msv.org>/Phone: 804-353-2721 x 143

VCU Women in Medicine & Science presents Winter 2002 Professional Development series

MSB 104/105 12:00 - 1:30 pm

Friday, February 8, 2002

Mentoring: Find a Mentor, be a Mentor**Francine Marciano-Cabral, Ph.D.**

Professor, Department of Microbiology & Immunology

**Congratulations to Dr. Ruth Campbell
President of the MCV Foundation
Winner 2000 WIM Professional Achievement Award**

Dr. Campbell is the first women to hold the presidency position for the MCV Foundation during its half century of existence. She previously served as President of the MCV Alumni Association and as an MCV Foundation trustee since 1989. Dr. Campbell served for 20 years as Associate Director of MCV's Child Chest Clinic and retired from the Department of Pediatrics in 1989.

*Medical College of Virginia Campus of Virginia Commonwealth University***Women In Medicine Faculty & Science Organization**

Established in 1992, the purpose of the *Women in Medicine & Science Faculty Organization* is to further the professional goals of women doctors and scientists at The Medical College of Virginia Campus of Virginia Commonwealth University. As a sponsor of forums for open communication, the organization facilitates networking, mentoring, and collaboration among women faculty, housestaff, and students. Full memberships are available to all full and part-time faculty in the School of Medicine, including clinicians, basic health scientists and administrators. Associate memberships are also available to students, housestaff, alumni of the School of Medicine and its training programs and retired faculty.

For more information about becoming a member of the *Women in Medicine & Science Faculty Organization* contact Deborah Lebman, Ph.D., at dalebman@vcu.edu, Chair of the membership committee. Dues are just \$30 per year of membership. Checks should be made out to the *Women in Medicine & Science Faculty Organization* and sent to Margaret Roberson, M.D., Treasurer; P.O. Box 980102, Richmond, VA 23298; Phone: (804) 828-5323; e-mail: mroberson@vcu.edu