



VCU *Institute for* Women's Health

Highlights ♦ 2008-09

OUR VISION

The Virginia Commonwealth University Institute for Women's Health is a dynamic leader for the university's collective efforts in women's health and a national model of excellence.

OUR MISSION

The mission of the VCU Institute for Women's Health is to promote standards of excellence in women's health care, advance cutting-edge research, foster community engagement and collaboration, enhance women's leadership and provide professional education toward the goal of improving the health of women across the life span.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The institute promotes:

- ◆ The empowerment of women in sustaining their own health and well-being
- ◆ A spirit of interdisciplinary collaboration and partnership
- ◆ Attention to the needs of diverse, underserved and marginalized women
- ◆ The fundamental role of women's health in family and community health
- ◆ Advocacy on behalf of women and girls to influence policy and practice
- ◆ Research that translates into evidence-based practice
- ◆ Faculty growth through mentorship

HISTORY

Established in 1999 with approval from the VCU Board of Visitors, the Institute for Women's Health seeks to improve the health of women through research, clinical care, education, community outreach and leadership development. The institute was created to bring together these diverse activities, generate synergy within VCU and foster coordinated alliances with the greater community.

In 2003, these efforts were rewarded when the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services designated the institute as a National Center of Excellence in Women's Health. Centers of Excellence serve as models in providing innovative, comprehensive, multidisciplinary and integrated health care systems for women across the life span.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

Research: Develop, support and facilitate interdisciplinary research including basic, clinical, behavioral, translational and community-engaged research in women's health and gender differences.

Community engagement: Create sustained partnerships with communities to provide state-of-the-art, culturally relevant health information, services and research opportunities.

Professional education: Develop culturally competent professional education programs in women's health that improve the quality of health care and promote evidence-based decision-making.

Clinical services: Promote standards of excellence in comprehensive multidisciplinary women's health care and advance VCU as the premier women's health service provider for the greater Richmond community.



RESEARCH

- ◆ More than 200 VCU faculty and students attended the annual Women's Health Research Day in April 2009. Vivian Pinn, MD, director of the Office of Research on Women's Health at the National Institutes of Health, gave the keynote address, "Moving Into the Future: New Dimensions and Strategies for Women's Health Research for the NIH." The conference also featured 40 poster presentations on women's health research from across VCU.
- ◆ Kai Cheang, PharmD, assistant professor in the VCU School of Pharmacy, received the institute's 2009 Elizabeth Fries Young Investigator Award. The award recognizes young researchers who show promise for improving women's health. Cheang studied the effect of oral contraceptives on metabolic risk factors in obese versus lean women.
- ◆ The institute awarded a second round of seed grants for community-based research, funding five projects that bridge academia with pressing community needs and contribute to improving the health of women and girls in our community. Faculty grantees included Arpita Aggarwal, MD, assistant professor of internal medicine; Tegwyn Brickhouse, DDS, PhD, associate professor and research director of pediatric dentistry; Pamela Dillon, PharmD, research liaison for the Center for Clinical and Translational Research; Leila Islam, clinical psychology doctoral student; and Jo Robins, PhD, RN, assistant professor of nursing.
- ◆ Institute researchers submitted several grant proposals to the NIH, including "An Innovative Model for Developing Women Physicians as Clinical Researchers" and "Using Motivational Incentives to Promote Exercise in Cocaine-Dependent Women." The institute also submitted a grant proposal with the Richmond Healthy Start Initiative to the Richmond Memorial Health Foundation to fund a community-based women's health access and information program using peer mentors in Fairfield Court.
- ◆ VCU continues to conduct major, ongoing federally funded projects in women's health, including a REACH US grant, "Community Partnerships for Promoting Pregnancies," from the Centers for Disease Control

and Prevention; a P60 grant Center of Excellence in Health Disparities Research from the NIH, focusing on prematurity and infant mortality; and a BIRCWH (Building Interdisciplinary Research Careers in Women's Health) grant, an NIH-funded program that allows junior faculty to develop as women's health researchers under the mentorship of senior investigators.

- ◆ The VCU School of Medicine selected four BIRCWH scholars this past year: Kazuaki Takabe, MD, PhD, assistant professor of surgery; Aylin Rizki, PhD, assistant professor of radiation oncology; Amelia Grover, MD, assistant professor of surgical oncology; and Lorie Sweeney, assistant professor of medicine. Keith Baker, PhD, assistant professor of biochemistry and molecular biology, was recently selected as a 5th BIRCWH scholar.
- ◆ Institute directors and mentees gave 62 women's health presentations at local, national and international venues and published 36 peer-reviewed articles in scientific journals.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

- ◆ As part of its 40th anniversary celebration, VCU honored the institute's domestic violence partnerships as one of 40 "Acts of Caring."
- ◆ The institute provided domestic violence shelter-based health services in four area shelters for women and children in crisis as well as on-site domestic and sexual violence victim advocacy services at the VCU Medical Center Emergency Department.
- ◆ The institute worked with the VCU and VCU Health System human resource departments to create and distribute "Recognizing Domestic Violence's Impact in the Workplace: A Guide for Faculty and Staff Managers."
- ◆ The institute is involved in the VCU Council on Community Engagement and in collaborations with the Richmond Healthy Start Initiative, YWCA and other community partners.
- ◆ The institute began a global outreach component in women's health, organizing a work group at VCU to foster partnerships for international health and service projects and identifying potential VCU International Partnership Universities for future collaboration opportunities.

House Joint Resolution No. 78 recognized the institute

as a **National Center of Excellence**
and for its contribution to
improving women's health in Virginia
in June 2008.

U.S. News & World Report

ranks VCU Women's Health

No. 18 in the country.

PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION

- ◆ Nearly 800 health care practitioners from 38 states and nine countries attended our annual Women's Health Conference in Williamsburg, Va., in March 2009. Along with the institute, conference co-sponsors included the *Journal of Women's Health* and the American Medical Women's Association (AMWA), which held their annual meeting during the conference. The conference was chaired by Wendy Klein, MD, FACP, and co-chaired by Susan Kornstein, MD.
- ◆ AMWA named the *Journal of Women's Health* as its official journal. Institute Executive Director Susan Kornstein, MD, serves as the journal's editor-in-chief and Wendy Klein, MD, FACP, is deputy editor.
- ◆ The institute held the annual lecture series "How to Treat a Woman: Strategies for Healthcare and Self-Care" for VCU Medical Center health care providers and also offered an undergraduate course, "Women's Health Issues Across the Life Span," in partnership with the VCU Department of Women's Studies.
- ◆ The Women's Health Residency Track in Internal Medicine enrolled 11 residents this year, including four interns.
- ◆ The institute co-sponsored the workshop "Building a Coordinated Health Care Response to Intimate Partner Violence" with the Virginia Department of Health's Division of Injury and Violence Prevention and the Virginia Sexual and Domestic Violence Action Alliance.

CLINICAL SERVICES

- ◆ *Richmond Magazine* recognized more than 30 VCU Medical Center physicians in its annual "Top Docs for Women" list. Twenty-five VCU doctors were the top vote-getters in their category, including Susan Kornstein, MD, (psychiatry), Robert Downs, MD, (osteoporosis), and Catherine Matthews, MD (urogynecology). Wendy Klein, MD, FACP, received special recognition for her work as a physician advocate.
- ◆ *Horizon Scan Monthly*, which is distributed to more than 50,000 hospital administrators across the country, showcased the VCU Women's Health Center at Stony Point in its September 2008 issue. The award-winning center has served as the "one-stop-shop" for the delivery of comprehensive health care to women in the Richmond area since 1993 and has been a model for many other centers around the country.
- ◆ VCU Medical Center became the first urogynecology center in the area to perform robotic-assisted, reconstructive surgery of the pelvic floor.

LEADERSHIP

- ◆ The 17th Annual VCU Women in Science, Dentistry and Medicine (WISDM) Pathways to Leadership Conference was held in March 2009, with more than 100 participants.
- ◆ The VCU School of Medicine reached a milestone of 50 women who achieved the rank of full professor and who were recognized and celebrated at the annual Pathways to Leadership Conference.
- ◆ Institute Executive Director Susan Kornstein, MD, took the helm at two prominent professional organizations. She will serve a three-year term as president of the International Association for Women's Mental Health and a two-year term as president of the North American Society for Psychosocial Obstetrics and Gynecology. Kornstein also received the Jewish Women International's 2008 Women to Watch Award for her work as a pioneer in women's health.
- ◆ Dace Svikis, PhD, deputy director of the institute, received the 2009 Distinguished Scholar Award from the VCU College of Humanities and Sciences.
- ◆ The Robert Wood Johnston Foundation recognized Judith Collins, RNC, MS, WHNP, FAAN, chair of the institute's professional advisory board, for her work "from nursing to public health policy."



VCU INSTITUTE FOR WOMEN'S HEALTH

Executive director

Susan Kornstein, MD, professor of psychiatry and obstetrics and gynecology

Deputy director

Dace Svikis, PhD, professor of psychology, psychiatry and obstetrics and gynecology

Program director and director of community engagement

Janett Forte, MSW, LCSW, assistant professor of psychiatry

Coordinator for research

Monica Leisey, PhD, MSW

Director of clinical services

Catherine Matthews, MD, associate professor of obstetrics and gynecology

Director of community-based research

Judith Bradford, PhD, associate professor of epidemiology and community health

Director of evaluation

Saba Masho, MD, MPH, DrPH, associate professor of epidemiology and community health

Director of leadership

Carol Hampton, MMS, associate dean for faculty and instructional development

Director of professional and community education

Brigitte Sicat, PharmD, assistant professor of pharmacy

Director of research

Robert Downs, MD, professor of internal medicine

Chair of professional advisory board

Judith Collins, WHNP, associate professor emeritus of nursing and medicine

Women's Health Conference chair

Wendy Klein, MD, FACP, associate professor emeritus of medicine and obstetrics and gynecology



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