

## Women's Health E-News Fall 2009

### WOMEN'S HEALTH NEWS AT VCU

#### **VCU-Chesterfield Community Services Board Substance Abuse Division research partnership receives award**

A team of researchers from Virginia Commonwealth University and the Chesterfield Community Services Board Substance Abuse Division is one of 27 teams/organizations from across the country selected to receive a 2009 Science and Service Award from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. The team was recognized for its research that has helped change and shape the quality of drug addiction treatment and recovery services in the Richmond area. The annual award program, now in its third year, recognizes public and private sector organizations and community-based coalitions that have worked to improve their communities and the lives of individuals by providing the best services possible. **Dace Svikis, Ph.D.**, principal investigator for VCU, and IWH Deputy Director, Ned Snead, program director for the Chesterfield Community Services Board Substance Abuse Division, and his team have been involved with three National Institutes of Health, multi-site national studies on a variety of topics, the latest of which featured HIV counseling and testing for individuals with alcohol and other drug problems.

#### **Institute hosts Celebrating Women's Health: Our Bodies Ourselves event**

Highlighting the event on September 25 was the internationally known women's health activist and writer Judy Norsigian, co-founder and executive director of Our Bodies Ourselves. Norsigian spoke from her more than 40 years of experience advocating and inspiring women to take charge of their own health by providing accessible, research-based information about women's health and sexuality. She also focused on the organization's newest quest to address the questions and needs of women during pregnancy, childbirth and the "fourth trimester" of early motherhood. Her newest book, *Our Bodies, Ourselves: Pregnancy and Birth*, dispels many common misconceptions about maternity care and provides women with the information they need to make wise decisions and approach birth with confidence. For more information, see the VCU view article: [http://www.news.vcu.edu/vcu\\_view/pages.aspx?nid=3076](http://www.news.vcu.edu/vcu_view/pages.aspx?nid=3076)

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### **VCU Health System Again Ranks Among “America’s Best Hospitals”**

VCU Health System noted in 2009-2010 report for excellence in heart and heart surgery, kidney disorders, orthopedics and rehabilitation. The Virginia Commonwealth University Health System has been ranked in U.S. News Media Group’s 2009 publication of America’s Best Hospitals. The VCU Health System is the only medical center in Central Virginia to be ranked in the report. The VCU Health System specifically was noted for excellence in heart and heart surgery, ranked 44th in the country. It also ranked 44th in the country for treating people with kidney disease, 45th in the country for orthopedics, and 20th in the country for rehabilitation. For more information, visit:

<http://www.news.vcu.edu/news.aspx?v=detail&nid=2987s>

### **VCU Health System Named a 2009 Working Mother 100 Best Company by Working Mother Magazine.**

The Virginia Commonwealth University Health System was named today as one of the nation’s 100 best companies of 2009 for working mothers by Working Mother magazine. This marks the fifth time the VCU Health System has received this honor, which recognizes companies for dedication to family-friendly benefits, support and wellness opportunities and financial assistance programs like tuition reimbursement and retirement planning. Among its numerous initiatives, the VCU Health System gained recognition in several areas, including its dedication to the advancement of women. Females make up 80% of the VCU Health System’s workforce and nine of 16, or 56 percent, of its top executives are women, up from 50 percent last year. For the complete article visit: [www.news.vcu.edu/news.aspx?v=detail&nid=3055](http://www.news.vcu.edu/news.aspx?v=detail&nid=3055)

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The Institute for Women’s Health has compiled our **2008-09 Highlights Report**. For a copy visit our website or contact us for a hard copy. [www.womenshealth.vcu.edu](http://www.womenshealth.vcu.edu)

## **WOMEN’S HEALTH NEWS**

### **Richmond infant-mortality rates decline**

Fewer infants died in Richmond last year than the previous year, and city health officials credit a comprehensive effort involving multiple city agencies and community partners. The infant-mortality rate was 10.9 deaths per 1,000 live births in 2008, a decline from a rate of 12.4 deaths per 1,000 in 2007. In actual numbers, there were 36 infant deaths in 2008, compared with 41 in 2007. The city’s African-American infant-mortality rate, often twice as high or higher than the white infant-mortality rate, also dropped, going from 18.9 per 1,000 in 2007 to 11.9 per 1,000 in 2008. The data was shared at a quarterly meeting of the Richmond Healthy Start Initiative Consortium, which brings together many of the city’s partners working to combat infant mortality including Rose Stith-Singleton, director of the Richmond Healthy Start Initiative. For complete RTD article visit:

[http://www2.timesdispatch.com/rtd/lifestyles/health\\_med\\_fit/health/article/MORT17\\_20090916-222806/293469/](http://www2.timesdispatch.com/rtd/lifestyles/health_med_fit/health/article/MORT17_20090916-222806/293469/)

## **RE-INTRODUCTION OF THE INTERNATIONAL VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN ACT (I-VAWA)**

Living free from violence is a human right. Yet millions of women and girls around the world encounter rape, domestic abuse, mutilation and other forms of gender-based violence. Too often no one is held accountable for these crimes. With your help, we can urge governments to hold perpetrators responsible and put an end to this cycle of violence against women. Both the US Senate & House are working on reintroduction and passage by Congress, this fall, of the International Violence Against Women Act (I-VAWA). The Institute will be tracking this activity and will send alerts and action requests and post information on our website. If you would like more information, you can visit:

- **Amnesty International USA** [www.amnestyusa.org/ivawa](http://www.amnestyusa.org/ivawa)
- **Family Violence Prevention Fund** [www.endabuse.org/ivawa](http://www.endabuse.org/ivawa)
- **Women Thrive Worldwide** [www.womenthrive.org](http://www.womenthrive.org)

Amnesty International USA, Family Violence Prevention Fund and Women Thrive are three organizations leading a nation-wide campaign to end violence against women worldwide with the centerpiece of this campaign: the International Violence Against Women Act, a bill that, if passed, would help millions of women in developing countries escape violence and poverty.

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## **October is National Breast Cancer Awareness Month.**

An American woman has a one-in-eight lifetime risk of developing breast cancer, but overall risk increases dramatically after age 40. Roughly two out of three women with invasive breast cancer are age 55 or older when diagnosed. Lifestyle changes can help reduce risk, and they're particularly important as you get older. A mammogram can help, too; it won't reduce risk for breast cancer, but it may detect the disease in its early, most treatable stages. For more information, visit: [www.womenshealth.gov](http://www.womenshealth.gov) or National Breast Cancer Awareness Month at [www.nbcam.org](http://www.nbcam.org)

## **COMMUNITY ENGAGED RESEARCH IN WOMEN'S HEALTH**

Providing leadership in women's health includes facilitating research that is linked to the needs, concerns, and questions of our community. The Institute is committed to encourage and support community-university research partnerships.

For more information about creating Community-University research partnerships, or if you have a research question for which you need a community or university partner, please contact Monica Leisey at [Leisey@vcu.edu](mailto:Leisey@vcu.edu) or call at 827-2241.

## **RESEARCH IN WOMEN'S HEALTH**

### **Why Women's Health Research Matters.... Because Sex Matters...**

Differences between the sexes exist and whether a person is male or female matters in the prevalence and severity of a broad range of diseases, disorders, and conditions. It matters at every stage of life and at every level - from the single cell to the entire body. It matters to the health of everyone.

Understanding why there are such large differences between how women and men experience diseases is at the heart of women's health research. Biomedical research is the key to finding important answers to such questions as: why women are afflicted with depression twice as often as men; and why eating disorders are 10 times more common in women than men; and why lupus and other autoimmune diseases affect women three to four times as often as men. Such research has important implications for both women and men in terms of clinical practice, disease prevention and manifestation and medical education. Research is crucial to health care planners and clinicians who serve women. It can provide the evidence basis for real improvements in the well-being of women, their families and their communities.

### **New Discoveries Every Day in Women's Health Research @ VCU**

At Virginia Commonwealth University, a national leader in women's health research, experts are exploring all facets of research that affect women across the lifespan through basic, preventive, clinical and applied research. This commitment is evident in the breadth and diversity of specialized women's health research being undertaken. VCU researchers are collaborating to study depression and menopause, treatments for cancer, addiction and abuse of drugs, alcohol and tobacco, reproductive biology, osteoporosis, preterm birth and infant mortality, diabetes, obesity and metabolic syndrome, mood and anxiety disorders, incontinence, health disparities and community engaged research addressing pressing community identified needs, to name of few of the current areas focusing specifically on women. The VCU Institute for Women's Health provides leadership, vision and support to a growing network of women's health researchers, policy makers, healthcare providers and women. We are proud to be creating a visionary and cutting-edge women's health research agenda that will make a real and positive difference in the lives of women and girls of Virginia. If you are interested in getting involved, please contact Monica Leisey, PhD. Coordinator for Research at 804-827-2241 or [leiseymr@vcu.edu](mailto:leiseymr@vcu.edu)

## **GLOBAL WOMEN'S HEALTH**

### **Guatemala Human Rights Delegation – "Women's Right to Live Campaign"**

Janett Forte, IWH Program Director, and a team of 14 other people including VCU School of Social Work faculty member Dr Karen Rotabi, VCU MSW Alumnae Abby Dini, current BSW student Priscilla Witwer and 3 staff from the Virginia Sexual and Domestic Violence Action Alliance including Beth Leftwich, Debbie Haynes, and Carmen Williams participated in the August '09 delegation which explored violence against women, including *femicide*. The work included meetings with 15 groups and individuals, receiving testimonies of violence survivors and human rights advocates. Currently, Guatemala is one of the worst examples in the world of this crime. The violent acts frequently include torture and ritualistic abuses with women's bodies being left in public locations as a message to the community and striking fear, thereby making it a form of terrorism. Since 2000, over 5500 Guatemalan women have been brutally murdered. These gender-based crimes have been characterized as "femicide" because they target females. 98% of the crimes go unpunished. The team of 7 from Richmond is continuing to meet and strategize ways to raise awareness and increase support for women's human rights in Guatemala. Information and a PowerPoint presentation on the trip are posted on the IWH website, visit: [www.womenshealth.vcu.edu/community/guatemala\\_hr.html](http://www.womenshealth.vcu.edu/community/guatemala_hr.html)

For more information about the Guatemala Human Rights Commission (GHRC), visit: [www.ghrc-usa.org/Programs/ForWomensRighttoLive/Delegation.htm](http://www.ghrc-usa.org/Programs/ForWomensRighttoLive/Delegation.htm)

### **Zambia HIV/AIDS intervention**

IWH Director of Community-Based Research, Judy Bradford, traveled as a member of the NASTAD's Zambia Team in August 2009. The team is responsible for developing a national monitoring and evaluation infrastructure for HIV/AIDS, in conjunction with the Zambian National AIDS Council. Dr. Bradford has a specific role on the Team to develop capacity for a Center of Excellence at the University of Zambia, including faculty and student exchanges and community-based research throughout the country's 137 districts. The development of HIV education and prevention interventions for women is a key component of this effort.

## **UPCOMING EVENTS**

### **Sneakers & Genes for Daughters – Breast Cancer Awareness program**

The VCU Massey Cancer Center is offering the "Sneakers & Genes for Daughters" program, funded by a grant from Susan G. Komen for the Cure, to increase breast health awareness among women ages 18–49, whose mothers had breast cancer. Presented by experts from Massey, the three-session series will be held from 6:30 to 8 p.m. at the Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden, 1800 Lakeside Ave. Session 1, Nutrition & Exercise for Cancer Risk Reduction: What's Myth and What's Fact?, will be held Oct. 5; Session 2, Understanding Family Breast Cancer Risk, will be held Oct. 19; and Session 3, Breast Cancer Screening – What You Need to Know, will be held Oct. 26.

Sessions are free. For more information call 828-9891 or register online at:

[www.Massey.vcu.edu/sneakersandgenes](http://www.Massey.vcu.edu/sneakersandgenes)

### **Dra. Gladys Monterosso Event (Guatemalan Torture Survivor) @ VCU**

On October 20, 2009, the LA MILPA: Guatemala Interest Group and the Highland Support Project Club. VCU Institute for Women's Health and VCU School of Social Work will be hosting Dr. Gladys Monterosso for a speaking event which will focus on violence against women. The event begins at 1:00 PM with a broad discussion on the problem of violence against women in Guatemala with emphasis on femicide. Dra. Monterosso, a law professor in Guatemala, will give testimony of her own survival of assault/rape/torture and that begins at 2:00 PM. The event takes place at the Pace Center at 700 W. Franklin Street. The event is free, and open to the public. For more information contact Janett Forte at [jforte@vcu.edu](mailto:jforte@vcu.edu) or 827-1200

**October is Domestic Violence Awareness Month** Sponsored by VCU- Sexual Assault & Dating Violence Education by Students (SAVES) and the VCU Wellness Resource Center. For more information, contact [saves@vcu.edu](mailto:saves@vcu.edu) or 828-WELL.

[www.studentorg.vcu.edu/saves](http://www.studentorg.vcu.edu/saves)

**"A Rose for Toni"**: One-woman dramatic monologue that addresses the realities of intimate partner violence. Performed by VCU alumni Dawn Howard of FEVOR Productions Tuesday, October 6 at the Commons Theater, 7pm- 9pm

**The Clothesline Project:** A national event; visual display of t-shirts made by or for survivors of intimate partner violence, sexual assault, stalking or other hate crimes. For more information: [www.clotheslineproject.org](http://www.clotheslineproject.org) Wednesday October 7 @ the Commons Plaza, 11am- 4pm

**Sex Signals:** A nationally touring performance group that addresses sexual assault on college campuses from Catharsis Productions and Bass/Schuler Entertainment. *"The Real Life Funny Sort-of-Improv Show About Sex and Stuff"*. Thursday, October 8 at the Commons Salons, 7pm-9pm. For more information: [www.catharsisproductions.com](http://www.catharsisproductions.com)

**The Red Flag Campaign:** A statewide campaign that addresses intimate partner violence, sexual assault, stalking and unhealthy relationships. For more information: [www.theredflagcampaign.org](http://www.theredflagcampaign.org)

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### **How To Treat A Woman: Strategies for Healthcare & Self-Care**

The Institute for Women's Health continues its series of brown-bag seminars focused on women's health for all health care professionals. Upcoming event is "Weight Loss: Practical Strategies ...That Work" with Jeffrey Sicut, MD, FACE of the Virginia Endocrinology & Osteoporosis Center. The seminar is on Wednesday, November 11<sup>th</sup>, 2009 in the Critical Care Hospital – Conference Room – 1<sup>st</sup> Floor –Room 304 CEUs are available. For information 827-1200 or visit [www.womenshealth.vcu.edu](http://www.womenshealth.vcu.edu)

**SAVE THE DATE: Women's Health 2010: The 18th Annual Congress - March 26-28, 2010 Washington, DC.** *We have outgrown our space in Williamsburg, Virginia!* Under the leadership of the VCU Institute for Women's Health, *Journal of Women's Health*, and the National Cancer Institute, in collaboration with the American Medical Women's Association, we are excited to announce that our 2010 meeting will be held at the Crystal Gateway Marriott, which is minutes from Reagan National Airport and close to central Washington, with easy Metro access. Our 2010 program will be better than ever. The Congress will be preceded by a half-day pre-meeting symposium on Thursday, March 25 on health policy followed by a visit to The Hill, under the leadership of The American Medical Women's Association. Watch for further developments and early registration opportunities via e-mail and on the website: [www.bioconferences.com/wh](http://www.bioconferences.com/wh)

The **36th Annual Meeting of the North American Society for Psychosocial Obstetrics and Gynecology** (NASPOG) will be held Wednesday, February 10 - Saturday, February 13, 2010 at the Jefferson Hotel in Richmond, Virginia. Dr Susan Kornstein is the current President of NASPOG and Drs Dace Svikis and Wendy Klein are on the program committee. The Annual Meeting of NASPOG is known for its great scientific and social interchange and the 36th Annual Meeting will be no exception. The Program Committee is in the process of developing an exciting and rewarding program that will focus on Women's Mental Health and Healthcare. Presenters will include nationally and internationally known Obstetricians, Gynecologists, Psychiatrists, Psychologists, Behavioral Scientists, Nurses and Social Workers. For updates and registration information, visit: [www.naspog.org/meetings.html](http://www.naspog.org/meetings.html)

## UPCOMING CLASSES AT VCU

### Nutrition Classes

Learn how to make informed food choices by developing sound eating and physical activity habits from our registered dietitian. For more information, call 804-327-8830. To register for any of these classes, call 804-560-8955.

### New: Food & Fitness: Health For a Lifetime Weight Control Seminars

October 19, Monday Evening 7:00 – 9:00 PM *OR*

November 9, Monday Evening 7:00 – 9:00 PM

#### In this seminar you'll learn:

- .. The "*truth*" about fad diets!
- .. How much protein, carbohydrate and fat you *really* need to eat to lose weight
- .. How to lose weight without feeling hungry or deprived
- .. How to plan meals and snacks
- .. How to save money at the Grocery store
- .. How to read a food label
- .. How to cook healthier foods
- .. How to order healthier foods when eating out
- .. Why aerobic exercise is essential for weight loss
- .. How to choose the best exercise for your weight loss

If you have any questions about the seminar, contact Mary-Jo Sawyer, RD, class instructor, call **327-8830** or email [msawyer@mcvh-vcu.edu](mailto:msawyer@mcvh-vcu.edu)

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### Family Life Education

Classes include Healthy Beginnings Tour, Breastfeeding Class, Car Seat Safety, Childbirth Preparation, Infant CPR, and Newborn Parenting. All classes are for adults only. To register or for more information, call 828-4409.

**New Daddy Boot Camp** (Men only) Workshop for men, taught by men, dealing with all the new experiences for first-time fathers, including care for the new baby, care for the new mom, finances, diapering and conflicting advice. 3 hour class. VCU Women's Health Center 9000 Stony Pt. Parkway, \$25 To register, call 804-288-3431

### Centering Pregnancy Program: A Model for Prenatal Care

Centering Pregnancy groups are made up of 10 to 12 women who will all deliver babies around the same time. The groups include discussion about pregnancy and how to care for the new baby, and in each session, moms will have some private time with a midwife, nurse, or doctor. Groups are available at the Stony Point Women's Health Center. Contact Ellen Coffin at **628-3042** for more information.

## WOMEN'S HEALTH CLINICAL TRIALS & STUDIES AT VCU

### Fibromyalgia Clinical Trial

Do you suffer from muscle/joint pain, stiffness, fatigue, sleeplessness, and/or difficulty with daily tasks? If so, you may be suffering from fibromyalgia. Dr. Susan Kornstein of the VCU Mood Disorders Institute is now conducting a clinical research study for this painful condition. Research care is provided free of charge at our off-campus location.

### Volunteers Needed For NIH Study on Premenstrual Dysphoric Disorder

Dr. Susan G. Kornstein is conducting a research study of an investigational medication for Premenstrual Dysphoric Disorder or PMDD, a severe form of PMS. All research care is provided at no charge. For more information on either of these studies, please call the VCU Mood Disorders Institute at 804-828-5639, or e-mail [mdi@vcu.edu](mailto:mdi@vcu.edu). Or visit [www.mood.vcu.edu](http://www.mood.vcu.edu)

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### Newly Diagnosed Cancer Patients Wanted to Participate in Survey Study

This study is designed to find out patients' information needs during cancer treatment. Eligible participants have been diagnosed in the past 8 weeks of at least a stage 2 cancer. Participants complete 3 survey sessions over 9 months. Survey sessions take place at the Massey Cancer Center, Stony Point or by telephone. Participants can receive up to a total of \$75.00 for participating. For information on this study, call Laura Kuhn at (804) 628-7528 or toll free at 1-866-993-0328 for more details.

**The VCU Program for Polycystic Ovary Syndrome Research & Treatment.** The center is currently sponsoring a number of research studies for women with Polycystic Ovary Syndrome (PCOS) and for women with regular menses (normal controls). If you are interested in more information about or in volunteering for one of these studies, please contact Ms. Terre Williams at 828-2663 or Leslie Bobb at 827-0171 Compensation is provided for participation for all of the studies. For information on current Research and Clinical Studies visit: [www.vcu.edu/pcos/research.html](http://www.vcu.edu/pcos/research.html)

## ABOUT US

The **Institute for Women's Health** was established in 1999 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 lifespan. For more information, please call (804) 827-1200 or visit [www.womenshealth.vcu.edu](http://www.womenshealth.vcu.edu)

Susan G. Kornstein, MD, Executive Director \* Janett Forte, MSW, Program Director

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Contact: Janett Forte at 804-827-1200 or [jforte@vcu.edu](mailto:jforte@vcu.edu)