

## Women's Health E-News Summer 2008

### WOMEN'S HEALTH NEWS AT VCU

**VCU Institute for Women's Health recognized by General Assembly** House Joint Resolution No. 78 commends the institute on its continuing commitment to provide quality health care for women in Virginia and for its mission to improve the health of women through clinical care, research, education, community outreach and leadership development. For more info and photo visit:

[http://www.news.vcu.edu/vcu\\_view/pages.aspx?nid=2531](http://www.news.vcu.edu/vcu_view/pages.aspx?nid=2531)

### **Susan G. Kornstein, M.D. to Receive Jewish Women International's 2008 Women to Watch Award**

Washington, D.C. – Jewish Women International (JWI) has selected **Susan G. Kornstein, M.D.** as a 2008 Women to Watch honoree for her work as a pioneer in women's health. Kornstein is a professor of psychiatry and obstetrics/gynecology at Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU). She is co-founder and executive director of the VCU Institute for Women's Health, a groundbreaking center for treatment, research, education, community outreach and the promotion of female leadership in science and medicine. Kornstein, an internationally known researcher in depression, is editor-in-chief of the *Journal of Women's Health* and president of the International Association for Women's Mental Health. Kornstein is one of ten exceptional Jewish women from across the United States who will receive the 2008 Women to Watch award. In addition to appearing in the fall issue of *Jewish Woman* magazine, the women will be honored at an annual celebration that includes a gala luncheon, awards ceremony and dynamic honorees' discussion panel. This year's event will take place December 8, 2008 at the Hilton Washington. For more information about Women to Watch and JWI, or to purchase tickets to the gala luncheon, call 800.343.2823 or visit [www.jwi.org](http://www.jwi.org)

**VCU Across the Spectrum research magazine Spring issue focuses on Women's Health Research** 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 for more info visit:

<http://www.spectrum.vcu.edu/insideresearch/women/index.html>

## **VCU has first urogynecology center in area to perform robotic-assisted, reconstructive surgery of the pelvic floor**

The Virginia Commonwealth University Medical Center recently performed the Richmond area's first *da Vinci sacrocolpopexy* – a minimally invasive surgical procedure designed to correct pelvic organ prolapse. Pelvic organ or uterine prolapse occurs when the connective tissues or muscles within the body cavity are weak and unable to hold the pelvic and vaginal tissues in their natural orientation. More than 120,000 cases of uterine and vaginal vault prolapse are surgically treated each year in the United States. Prolapse of any pelvic floor organ — vagina, uterus, bladder or rectum, occurs when the connective tissues or muscles weaken with age, after child birth, with weight gain and strenuous physical labor. **Catherine Matthews, M.D.**, associate professor in the Division of Urogynecology and Reconstructive Pelvic Surgery in the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology and IWH Director of Clinical Services, performed the corrective surgical procedure using a minimally-invasive state-of-the art technology known as the da Vinci robot. Women suffering from this condition typically experience problems with bulging of the vaginal tissues, pelvic heaviness or pressure, urinary leakage, bowel control and evacuation problems, vaginal irritation and sexual dysfunction. These problems, which women often don't discuss because of personal embarrassment, can have a dramatic negative effect on quality of life, according to Matthews. "The use of the da Vinci which has the articulating arms and the ability to do extensive meticulous dissection and suturing has really allowed us to make this operation very feasible through a laparoscopic approach," said Matthews. For the complete article, see <http://www.news.vcu.edu/news.aspx?v=detail&nid=2561>

**Former IWH Steering Committee member Judy Larkin develops program for women's health in Cambodia.** The Women's Resource Center (WRC) is a Cambodian (local) non-profit, non-governmental organization (LNGO) located in Siem Reap. The WRC assists Cambodian (Khmer) women through its program of health counseling and referrals, and health education services, which include informal English language groups, individual tutoring and work/skills seminars. A mental health group program, with individual counseling, addresses depression and other mental health concerns.

Cambodian (Khmer) women are helped through their program of services. Here are a few of their stories:

Sina is 25. She was not well during her first pregnancy, she almost died during childbirth, and her infant daughter is still not a strong, healthy child. Now Sina is pregnant again and she is afraid because she has no knowledge of pre-natal and infant care. Raised in an orphanage, she does not have family support and her husband does not know how to help her.

Det is 15, lonely, scared and ashamed. She sleeps on the floor on the top of the massage parlor where she works and is given little to eat. Det left her village to make money for her family but makes very little. She is illiterate and speaks no English. I have seen men bargain for her. She is ashamed because she needs the money they offer. If she can learn to speak English she will have a chance to get a better job to support herself.

Channy is 35. She cries at night, and hides wherever she can find a place to sleep. She wants to sleep all the time. Fear makes her move from place to place. "He" may find her and beat her again. She knows of a place to get help but is afraid to go there alone.

These women can find help at the WRC. Women may also be helped to access services offered by other organizations. The program goal is to empower women to achieve better lives and to advocate for them. The program is innovative and unique in that Khmer women direct and staff the program and serve on its governing board.

For more information or to make a contribution, visit: [www.angkorwomen.org](http://www.angkorwomen.org)

## NATIONAL WOMEN'S HEALTH NEWS

### **Two-fold Action Urged for Pre-Diabetes**

Lifestyle changes, coupled with a reduction in heart disease risks, will go a long way toward preventing pre-diabetes from progressing to the full-blown disease, experts from the American Association of Clinical Endocrinologists (AACE) recommend. Pre-diabetes occurs when blood sugar levels or impaired glucose tolerance is elevated, but not quite to the point defined as diabetes. More than 56 million Americans currently suffer from pre-diabetes, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. "Diabetes has become the major problem in the United States," Dr. Harold Lebovitz, a professor of medicine at the division of endocrinology and metabolism/diabetes at the State University of New York Health Sciences Center at Brooklyn.

To view full article : <http://www.4women.gov/news/english/617738.htm>

### **Family Meals Can Help Teen Girls Avoid Drugs, Alcohol**

Eating meals together as a family can reduce a teen girl's risk of turning to alcohol or drugs, a new study suggests. In families who ate at least five meals a week together, the teen girls were much less likely to drink alcohol, or smoke marijuana or cigarettes five years later, said study author Marla Eisenberg, an assistant professor of pediatrics at the University of Minnesota Medical School. To View the full article

<http://www.4women.gov/news/english/617671.htm>

### **Women who nurse their babies half as likely to get joint condition**

Women who breast-feed their babies longer are less likely to get rheumatoid arthritis, Swedish researchers said. Mothers who breast-fed for 13 months or more were half as likely to get the painful joint condition as women who never breast-fed, said Mitra Pikwer and colleagues at the Malmo University Hospital in Sweden, who led the study. The Swedish team compared 136 women with rheumatoid arthritis and 544 women of similar age without the disease. The findings bolster previous research linking breast-feeding to a reduced risk of the disease. But, as with other studies, the Swedish teams said they did not know the exact reason why <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/24594431/>

**For up-to-date information and resources on women's health, visit or call the National Women's Health Information Center**

The National Women's Health Information Center (NWHIC) is the most reliable and current information resource on women's health today. We offer FREE women's health information on more than 800 topics through our call center and web site.

[www.womenshealth.gov](http://www.womenshealth.gov)

800-994-9662 or 888-220-5446 (TDD)

Monday through Friday (9:00 am to 6:00 pm, eastern time)

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### **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. Njeri Jackson, Ph.D., Office of the Provost, and John Pierce, MD, Obstetrics and Gynecology, will speak on "Patients Don't Care How Much You Know Until They Know How Much You Care: Making the Most of the Patient-Provider Encounter" on Wednesday, September 10th, from 12:00 to 1:00 in the Learning Center at the MCV Main Hospital. To view the flyer:

<http://www.womenshealth.vcu.edu/IWH-HTTW2008Seminars.pdf>

**SAVE THE DATE - Women's Health 2009: The 17th Annual Congress, March 27-29, 2009 at the Williamsburg Lodge, Williamsburg, VA.** Presented by the VCU Institute for Women's Health, *Journal of Women's Health*, and the American Medical Women's Association. Program Chair: Dr. Wendy Klein, Program Co-Chair: Dr. Susan Kornstein. **For program updates and further details, visit:**  
<http://www.bioconferences.com/Conferences/WomensHealth/index.aspx>

### **Save the Date: Building a Coordinated Health Care Response to Intimate Partner Violence** - Friday, September 19, 2008, Richmond, VA

Building a coordinated health response involves increasing skills and awareness in identifying, treating and referring women experiencing violence. This training will focus on improving the collaboration and partnerships between health professionals and shelter program staff and volunteers in responses to serving victims of domestic and sexual violence in their respective agencies. Sponsored by the Institute for Women's Health, Virginia Department of Health Division of Injury & Violence Prevention and the Virginia Sexual & Domestic Violence Action Alliance.

## UPCOMING CLASSES

### **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.

### **Choose to Lose**

September 29 – November 17, 2008, Monday Evenings, 7:00 – 9:00 pm

VCU Medical Center at Stony Point, 1<sup>st</sup> floor conference room

Forget fad diets! Learn how to make your own food choices and lose weight. This eight-week program will teach you how choose a balanced diet, cook healthier and make good food choices when eating out. \$175 for the regular program or \$200 for the “plus” program that includes a one-hour nutrition consultation.

### **Diabetic Dining Made Easy**

Monday Evening, 7-9 PM, September 8<sup>th</sup>

Wednesday mornings, 9:30 – 11:30 am, 9/17, 10/1, 11/5, 12/3

VCU Medical Center at Stony Point, 1<sup>st</sup> floor conference room

Learn how to eat to control your blood sugar and enjoy what you eat. \$35.

### **Lean ‘N Easy Cholesterol Lowering**

Monday Evening, 7-9 PM: September 22

Tuesday mornings, 9:30 – 11:30 AM: 9/23, 10/14, 11/18

VCU Medical Center at Stony Point, 1<sup>st</sup> floor conference room

Learn how to lower your cholesterol and taste delicious recipes in class. \$35.

Sign up to receive the “Your Nutrition News” electronic newsletter. To subscribe, please email Mary-Jo Sawyer, Registered Dietician at [msawyer@mcvh-vcu.edu](mailto:msawyer@mcvh-vcu.edu).

### **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. 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

*Clinical trials offer individuals the opportunity to participate in research studies that are used to answer specific questions about the safety and efficacy of new medications, new therapies, or new ways of using known treatments. Individuals participate in clinical trials in order to play a more active role in their own health care, gain access to new research treatments before they are widely available, and help others by contributing to medical research in women's health.*

### **Participants Recruited for Study on Premenstrual Dysphoric Disorder**

The Virginia Commonwealth University Mood Disorders Institute is recruiting participants for a national study of a new treatment method for premenstrual dysphoric disorder, a severe and debilitating form of premenstrual syndrome, or PMS. Premenstrual dysphoric disorder, or PMDD, affects between 3 percent and 8 percent of women. Many women with PMDD experience mood swings, depression, irritability, anxiety and feelings that life is not worth living, with 15 percent attempting suicide. These symptoms, which occur only premenstrually, are often accompanied by changes in sleep and appetite, changes in energy, breast pain, and bloating — all of which can be severe and lead to disturbances in functioning at home or at work. The principal investigator, Susan G. Kornstein, M.D., a professor of psychiatry, and obstetrics and gynecology at VCU, said subjects will take the antidepressant sertraline for six months at the onset of symptoms, or will receive a placebo. The goal is to enroll 300 women among three sites — at Cornell, Yale and Virginia Commonwealth universities.

The study is supported by grants from the National Institute of Mental Health. For more information, call the VCU Mood Disorders Institute at 804-828-5639 or visit:

<http://www.news.vcu.edu/news.aspx?v=detail&nid=2362>

### **Depression Study**

Do you feel sad or depressed?

Have you lost interest in activities you used to enjoy?

Do you feel hopeless, worthless, or guilty?

Do you experience sleeplessness or lack of energy?

If you're experiencing any of these symptoms, are between the ages of 18 and 65 and medically stable, you may qualify to participate. Participants will receive study related exams, lab tests and study related care at no cost at our convenient off campus location. For information and to find out if you are eligible for this study call the Mood Disorders Institute at (804) 828-5639.

### **Generalized Anxiety Disorder Study**

*Do you suffer from anxiety and excessive worry?*

*Do you often worry about everyday events?*

*Do you feel fatigued, irritable, and unable to relax or concentrate?*

*Are you experiencing muscle tension and disturbed sleep?*

*Does your anxiety and worry interfere with everyday tasks?*

Dr. Susan Kornstein is conducting a research study of an investigational drug for Generalized Anxiety Disorder. If you are between the ages of 18-65 and medically stable, you may be eligible to participate. Research care is provided to qualified participants at no charge at our convenient off-campus facility. For more information, please call the VCU Mood Disorders Institute at (804) 828-5639.

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

This study is designed to find out patients' information needs during cancer treatment. 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 Gerry Meeks, MSW at (804) 628-2622 for more details.

### **Women With Fibromyalgia Sought for Research Study:**

The purpose of this study is to determine the effects of stress on symptoms and immune function in women with fibromyalgia. Participants will receive \$25 and free parking or bus pass. This one-time visit takes 90 minutes to complete.

In order to participate you must: (a) Be 18 years or older; (b) Have a diagnosis of fibromyalgia; (c) Not be on steroid treatments; (d) Not be pregnant, and (e) Not have immune system problems. Contact Victoria Menzies at (804) 628-3381.

E-mail: [vsmenzies@vcu.edu](mailto:vsmenzies@vcu.edu) (IRB #HM11637).

## **ABOUT US**

The **VCU 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 outreach and collaboration, enhance women's leadership, and provide training and education toward the goal of improving the health of women. The Institute is one of 20 National Centers of Excellence in Women's Health, serving as models for the nation in providing innovative, comprehensive, multidisciplinary, and integrated health care systems for 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 LCSW, Program Director

**Charlotte K. Roberts Women's Health Resource Center** (WHRC) provides quality information on health and wellness including prevention, conditions, diseases, and treatments. Information and services are available to anyone at no cost. Located adjacent to the Women's Health Center at Stony Point. For more info, Phone: 804-327-8857; Email : [whrc@vcu.edu](mailto:whrc@vcu.edu)

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