Women’s Health, Women Doctors and the Politics of Universal Healthcare

It’s not too late to attend AMWA’s 86th Annual Meeting, “Women’s Health, Women Doctors and the Politics of Universal Healthcare,” to be held January 31–February 3, 2002 at The Adams Mark Riverwalk Hotel, San Antonio, Texas. The opening ceremony gets underway on Friday, February 1st, with the keynote address by Pamela Peeke, MD, MPH, author of “Fighting Fat After Forty.”

During the meeting, attendees will be able to explore policy solutions to barriers to universal healthcare. Saturday’s Plenary Session will feature Vinnie DeMarco, JD, exploring the use of voter education to achieve social change; Joyce Mills, RN, MS examining health care from the nurses’ experience; Alfredo Vigil, MD describing the successful strategies successfully used in New Mexico to provide health care to underserved populations; and Quentin Young, MD addressing the challenges of providing healthcare for all Americans in a new era.

Come prepared to take advantage of thirty Continuing Medical Education workshops. Several special events scheduled for this year’s Annual Meeting, include the President’s Banquet, honoring President-Elect Elinor T. Christiansen, MD, and breakfast symposiums on hormone replace therapy and women and nutrition. The Bob Oaks Tour on Saturday will venture through historic San Antonio and visit the Institute of Texas Cultures and the San Antonio Art League Foundation. See the registration form in the preliminary program or our web site for more details and price information.

To register for the 86th Annual Meeting, please contact Jannine Jordan, AMWA Meetings Director by calling 703-838-0500 or register online at www.amwa-doc.org. A $25.00 discount on meeting registration will be given to AMWA members that bring a colleague who has never attended an Annual Meeting.

Bioterrorism Session Added to Annual Meeting

Recent anthrax attacks have highlighted the issue of bioterrorism and the capacity of our public health systems to respond. How prepared are we to face other threats, especially those involving more contagious agents like smallpox? A special workshop entitled “Bioterrorism: Is the Medical Community Prepared?” has been added to the Annual Meeting on Friday, February 1st from 2:00 – 3:00 pm.

The medical community faces several challenges in preparing for bioterrorist attacks including the decline of the public health system, varied and unplanned local response to large-scale health emergencies and the unknown nature of biological agent exposure and spread. AMWA will address these questions and many others at the Annual Meeting in a special session featuring invited panelists from the Centers for Disease Control, Federal Emergency Management Agency, and the Nuclear Threat Initiative. The discussion will focus on the difficulties facing healthcare personnel and the resources available to them. Other topics may include infectious disease surveillance and the public health network; advanced diagnostic techniques; medical response capabilities; and partnerships between the medical community and public safety agencies.
President’s Column

After fifteen months, it is time to say goodbye to you as president. One of the great joys of my presidency is the close relationship Dr. Elinor Christiansen, President-Elect, and I forged to apply our efforts toward advancing AMWA’s future. As Dr. Lynn Epstein joins us in the leadership with her fresh ideas, AMWA will continue to move forward.

I have been especially pleased and lucky to have a very actively involved and innovative Vice-President of Finance, Dr. Dana Weaver-Osterholtz. Dr. Weaver-Osterholtz spent many days at the AMWA National Office evaluating our management; she helped institute some significant cost-saving measures and changes in our accounting procedures. My life as president was made much more pleasant and fun by Dr. Diane Helentjaris, Program Chair. Outside her life in medicine, Dr. Helentjaris is an accomplished artist; her creative, organized mind conceived and birthed many exciting and innovative meeting programs. In addition, I am happy to note that the incoming Vice President of Career Development, Dr. Susan Sklar, has already begun to think about ways to advance her area of responsibility and to work on them as well as help formulate plans for the Institute for the Advancement of Women in Medicine and Healthcare. Finally, Dr. Michele Bloch, Vice-President of Communications, has been so much more than one who simply takes the roll call and keeps track of motions at Board Meetings. She has worked tirelessly to ensure that AMWA’s public face is credible and professional. Presently, she is co-chairing our search for a new JAMWA Editor and orchestrating further change to complement the tremendous start that our very able current Editor, Dr. Wendy Chavkin, has initiated.

During my presidency many accomplishments can be noted. The Institute for the Advancement of Women in Medicine and Healthcare is moving toward reality; four medical schools are working with AMWA towards its development with AMWA as the pivot and principal investigator. Our grant writer is exploring new grants. In May 2001, we inaugurated the International Women in Medicine Hall of Fame, with a gala celebration that raised more than $43,000 for the AMWA Foundation. We anticipate this year’s gala celebration, on June 21, 2002, will build on the previous year’s success. The president’s trip to Cuba was an immensely interesting and rewarding experience; twenty new members and several former members re-joined AMWA in order to be a part of this historic visit to learn about universal health care and alternative medicine. Our affiliation with Pri-Med as the purveyor of CME in primary care and women’s health with AMWA’s career development and leadership workshops as satellite conferences is underway for 2004. And, finally, our grant writer has completed a new grant on women’s health and the environment, which was solicited by Dow Chemical Company.

In November, the Board and several future board members came together to mold an eighteen month strategic plan for AMWA. That plan allows the fruitful projects described above to be shaped and finalized, and continues a focus on universal healthcare as one of AMWA’s three top legislative priorities. In a creative vein, the new strategic plan also endorses the idea of an AMWA consumer-member pathway. We intend to soldier a relationship with a consumer coalition, and offer an associate consumer membership, to continue our quest to improve the healthcare of women and their families.

AMWA is still a much-needed organization to continue to advance women’s health and to narrow disparities in career and leadership opportunities for women physicians. I have no doubt that AMWA will continue to thrive as the leading voice of women in medicine.

Medical Abortion Education Project

The Medical Abortion Education Project (MAEP) continues to bring CME-accredited educational programs on medical abortion to physicians throughout the country. “The objective is to familiarize health care providers with evidence-based, current information about medical abortion using mifepristone and misoprostol,” explains Physicians for Reproductive Choice and Health MAEP faculty member Anne R. Davis, MD of Columbia Presbyterian Hospital. “It’s an excellent introduction for those planning to provide medical abortion in the future, but it’s not a hands-on training to competency.” MAEP programs have been presented at the University of Massachusetts, an American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists regional meeting in Nova Scotia, Canada, and an AMWA Region VI meeting. Future MAEP presentation sites include the University of New Mexico, Medical College of Virginia, Harvard University and Anchorage, Alaska.

Due to the success of MAEP, we expect it will continue in 2002. For more information about MAEP, or to become a MAEP Host Site, please contact Stephanie Seeger, RHI Project Assistant, at sseeger@amwa-doc.org or call (703) 838-0500.
AMWA Launches Search for
New JAMWA Editor-in-Chief

Wendy Chavkin, MD, MPH, has recently announced her decision to resign as Editor-in-Chief of the Journal of the American Medical Women's Association (JAMWA), a position she has held since 1994. Dr. Chavkin, a Professor of Clinical Public Health and Obstetrics and Gynecology at Columbia University's Mailman School of Public Health, is stepping down from JAMWA to devote more time to policy research on reproductive health.

"Dr. Chavkin has raised the Journal's level of scholarship enormously, and dramatically increased its relevance to women's health," said AMWA President Omega Logan Silva. "We are immensely indebted to Dr. Chavkin for her many years of service to JAMWA—she will be sorely missed."

Under Dr. Chavkin's guidance, JAMWA tackled a broad range of women's health issues, including topics in clinical medicine, public health, ethics and politics; landmark JAMWA issues included “Women's Health Movements Today,” “Informed Consent and Confidentiality and Women's Health,” “Disparities in Women's Health” and supplements on Medical Abortion, Emergency Contraception, and Tobacco and Women's Health. Dr. Chavkin obtained additional funding to increase the journals reach, distribution, and influence in the US and abroad. The JAMWA website now serves as an important resource for information on women's health and as a mechanism for interaction with experts in the field.

AMWA has recently launched a search for a new Editor-in-Chief. A copy of the Position Description can be viewed at www.amwa-doc.org or obtained by calling the AMWA National Office at 703-838-0500.

Targeted Regulation of Abortion Providers Laws Threaten Access

Targeted Regulation of Abortion Providers (TRAP) laws attempt to regulate the medical practices or facilities of doctors who provide abortions by imposing burdensome requirements that are different and more stringent than regulations applied to comparable medical practices. Typical features of TRAP laws include burdensome requirements for licensing, inspection, administration, training of staff, testing of patients and others.

Supporters of TRAP laws claim they target abortion providers to make abortion safer. In reality, however, TRAP laws have not increased the safety of abortion – already an extremely safe procedure. Instead, these laws decrease abortion access and increase abortion cost by intruding into the practice of medicine, and subjecting physicians who perform abortions to harassment and even criminal and civil penalties.

While TRAP laws are not new, the recent FDA approval of mifepristone has prompted a resurgence in TRAP laws and proposals to extend existing laws to medical abortion as well. Recognizing this threat, AMWA, the American College of Obstetrics and Gynecology and Physicians for Reproductive Choice and Health sponsored a media training on TRAP laws in October. The workshop was organized by the Center for Reproductive Law and Policy to develop talking points about these regulations for our members to use when speaking with the media.

More information on TRAP laws is available from the Center for Reproductive Law and Policy at www.crlp.org. AMWA members with an interest in this or with experiences to share should contact the Advocacy Department at the AMWA National Office.

All members are encouraged to become more active in AMWA's projects and activities and to share their ideas for the organization by attending the House of Delegates, Board of Directors, and committee meetings. Committee meetings are open to all members unless indicated otherwise. The following committees will meet on Thursday, January 31st:

- Archives
- Bylaws
- Career Development
- Continuing Medical Education
- Credentials
- Finance
- Leadership Development
- Membership
- Nominating (closed)
- Program
- Publications
- Resolutions
- Web site
- Women's Health
- Universal Access

Medical education loans and community service scholarships are available to AMWA student members. The deadline for applying for loans and/or scholarships is April 30, 2002; supporting documentation is due May 15, 2002. Contact Marie Glanz for further information or to be put on the mailing list to receive applications in January.

Glasgow Essay Award – Submit your essay of 1,000 words about a mentor and role model. Deadline is May 31, 2002. The winner receives $1,000 and will be recognized at our 2003 Annual Meeting.

Carroll L. Birch Award – Submit your research for best original student research paper. Deadline is June 28, 2002. The winner receives $500 and will be recognized at our 2003 Annual Meeting.

For information on all of the above programs, please contact Marie Glanz at mglanz@amwa-doc.org.

3 × AMWA Connections × www.amwa-doc.org
Looking Back: 
Fifty Years as a Woman Doctor

In the forth segment of this series, Dr. Justin, a retired family practice physician from Colorado, shares her early career experiences.

Renate G. Justin, MD, AMWA member since 1975

My first job was in Arizona where I joined a compassionate, well-educated family physician in a small company town, which had a 20 bed industrial hospital. Long before insurance became common, a lumber company paid two physicians to provide unlimited access to medical care to the workers and their families. This was considered part of their earnings. My partner and I did obstetrics, general medicine and also performed surgery. The closest doctor and hospital were six hours away by car, which meant that we also took care of the many serious accidents that the lumberjacks sustained. At first, my partner and the company executives were hesitant to hire a woman, but I assured them that if the men were really sick, they would not care who ministered to them. With few exceptions, that is how it turned out.

We had no laboratory and had to do our own blood counts, sugars and whatever else we deemed necessary. We had an x-ray machine which required approaching two tubes to each other to cause a spark before a picture could be taken. This maneuver was tricky and dangerous; even an experienced operator, like my partner, was injured when he was off in his timing.

Daily I removed enormous splinters from various body parts of the men who worked in the sawmill. One night I received a call from the most reliable nurse at the hospital that a bear had scalped one of the tourist campers. I have to admit, I thought she was joking. However, after I crossed the short distance from my house to the hospital, I indeed found a young man bleeding profusely, with his entire scalp laid back, attached only to the nape of his neck. I managed to stabilize the man and send him on with his scalp reattached. The transition from a University affiliate to this practice required a good deal of courage. I kept telling myself that though I was inexperienced, I knew more than anyone else in the community, since there was no other doctor available.

Years later, I set up my own office in the Midwest and was the only woman doctor in town, and the first one to have an office. My practice was busy almost from the day I started to see patients. At first mostly women came, but soon they brought the whole family and I outgrew my small office. I joined the County Medical Society and regularly paid my dues, although sometimes I was not included in society events. The members of this society also spoke in an extremely unprofessional manner to me when I announced that I was hoping to open a family planning clinic, staffed by volunteers, for women who could not afford the cost of this service. Were it not for the efforts of a highly respected surgeon, the plan for the clinic would have been ended right there and then. We were allowed, not with the endorsement, but not with opposition from the County Medical Society to start the clinic in a church basement. It has since grown into a statewide system serving many women every day.

This series will conclude in the February/March issue of AMWA Connections, as Dr. Justin looks back on the various changes in the field of medicine and how far women physicians have come.

Call for Abstracts

Pan American Medical Women’s Alliance

The Pan American Medical Women's Alliance (PAMWA) will hold its next meeting in Fernandina Beach, Florida, October 23-27, 2002. The deadline for submission of abstracts is June 30, 2002. All abstracts will be reviewed by the PAMWA Scientific Program Committee. Preference for oral session presentations will be given those abstracts related to the theme of the conference, “Emerging Diseases: Old and New.” For more information, contact Jean Fourcroy, MD at fourcroy@aol.com or Marie Glanz at mglanz@amwa-doc.org at AMWA’s national office for submission criteria for abstracts.
Getting it Together: Questions? Answers?

Lynn C. Epstein, MD
Vice-President, Career Development; Associate Dean of Medicine, Brown University

What about medicine and your professional life keeps you awake at night? When you stop long enough to think about it, chances are that your concerns fall in a couple of domains:

♦ How your medical practice is structured—from control of who you are allowed to see and the time allocated per patient, to what you are permitted to do, how patients are billed, and you are reimbursed.

♦ How you can negotiate the necessary conditions for successful practice
  ■ Practice parameters
  ■ What matters to you
  ■ Preserving patient care and choice
  ■ Options such as compensation, learning/academic opportunities, and job sharing

♦ The business of medicine—The things medical school ignored
  ■ Who hires/pays/oversees whom? Health care economics
  ■ Who’s the boss? Human resources management
  ■ No doctor is an island: Networking, organizational culture and assessment
  ■ I have to learn what? Financial Management, budgeting, reporting, etc.
  ■ But I never wanted to be a lawyer! Legal issues in health care
  ■ I’m no techie! Information management phases and minuses
  ■ Advocacy for patients: Politics 101

♦ Remaining true to your goals and values: Be able to practice the way you want!

Unfortunately, most of us are so busy on the treadmill of our professional lives, to say nothing about carving space for personal domains, that we are left with little time or inclination to address these issues. Yet, we know the pace and structure of our professional lives are often determined to our detriment when voids continue to exist in these domains.

What can you do?
To assist members in regaining meaningful control of the professional options available to them, AMWA has arranged for a sequence of targeted sessions at the 2002 Annual Meeting. The sessions are offered in conjunction with the Medical Group Management Association (MGMA), an organization that in conjunction with the American College of Medical Practice Executives (ACMPE) has assembled a talented group of professionals and a body of knowledge for successful physician leaders and professionals in medical practices.

What We Are Offering You:
At the 2001 Annual Meeting, MGMA’s David J. Bachrach gave a highly rated presentation on Developing and Applying Exceptional Negotiating Skills. This year we have expanded the program to include a series of four sessions that will qualify those who attend for a certificate of competence. The first session, Negotiating Strategies, will be held Friday, February 1. The other three sessions will be held on Saturday, February 2 from 1:00–4:15 pm. These workshops are: What Makes an Effective Physician Administrator; The Critical Role of the Physician/Administrator Team in Patient Safety; and Legislative and Regulatory Issues Impacting Ambulatory Care. You must attend all four workshops to receive the certificate.

The Cost:
You might expect participation to cost in excess of several hundred dollars. However, these sessions are provided as a service to meeting attendees; there is no extra cost for participating.

Given the changing health care environment and the ever-increasing controls we face as we try to maintain state-of-the-art medical services, the MGMA series is “just what the doctor ordered!” We look forward to seeing you in San Antonio at the seminar series.

Annual Meeting in San Antonio

San Antonio, now the eighth largest city in the United States, is the site of the AMWA 2002 Annual Meeting. Founded in 1718 by Father Antonio Olivares, the city is a blend of many heritages: Native American, African-American, Old Mexico, German, and the “Wild West.” The city is rich in history including, The Alamo, where 189 defenders held out against 4,000 Mexican troops for 13 days, and Fort Sam Houston, the training site of the famed Buffalo Soldiers, African-American calvary fighters.

The City’s many beautiful sites include the Paseo del Rio (the River Walk) which borders the San Antonio River for two and one-half miles. Nearly seven million visitors a year delight in the city’s many charms.

The Annual Meeting is fast approaching. Plan now to join us in this beautiful, historic and just-plain-fun city! For more information visit the San Antonio Convention and Visitors Bureau at http://www.sanantoniocvb.com

Renew Your Membership

These are challenging times for us as well as for our patients. Health care is changing and we have to take a new perspective in our profession. We must be ready for whatever the future of medicine brings. As physicians, we are no strangers to the word challenge. As women, the word takes on an even greater meaning. AMWA is the only professional association specifically designed to address the needs and concerns of women physicians in all medical specialties and practice settings. Please renew your commitment to AMWA and renew your membership today, by calling 1-800-995-AMWA. Thank you for your continued support.
Calendar

February 1, 2002
2002 Award Nominations Deadline

April 30, 2002
Wilhelm-Frankowski Community Service Scholarship Application Deadline

June 21–23, 2002
AMWA’s 2002 Interim Meeting, McLean, VA (Washington, DC Metro Area)

June 30, 2002
Carroll L. Birch Award (best original student research paper) Deadline

AMWA Connections
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