Message from the Chair

Dear Colleagues,

I hope that you have enjoyed your summer and that the weather wherever you are has been as wonderful as it has been in beautiful Rhode Island. I am pleased to share this latest edition of Ob/Gyn News, the newsletter for the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology at The Warren Alpert Medical School of Brown University and Care New England’s Women & Infants Hospital of Rhode Island. It’s exciting to learn about how our graduates are bringing their knowledge and expertise to communities across our country and around the globe. If you have news to share, please email Denise Flinn at dflinn@wihri.org.

Once again, I thank you for your continued commitment to excellence in women’s health through clinical care, teaching, research and leadership.

Best,

Maureen G. Phipps, MD, MPH
Chair and Chace-Joukowsky Professor of Obstetrics & Gynecology
Assistant Dean for Teaching and Research in Women’s Health | Warren Alpert Medical School of Brown University
Professor of Epidemiology | Brown University School of Public Health
Chief of Obstetrics & Gynecology | Women & Infants Hospital of Rhode Island | Care New England

Annual Resident and Fellow Research Day

The Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology Residents and Fellows Research Day, under the direction of Kristen Matteson, MD, MPH, took place on June 2, 2016. The keynote speaker was Evan Myers, MD, MPH, chief of clinical and epidemiological research, professor of obstetrics and gynecology, Duke University School of Medicine, who presented “When Do We Know Enough? Clinical Decision Making, Guidelines and Research Prioritization.” Research projects were presented by PGY3 ob/gyn residents and graduating ob/gyn fellows.

Congratulations to the 2016 Obstetrics and Gynecology Graduates

The annual graduation dinner for obstetrics and gynecology residents and fellows took place on June 17, 2016 at the Providence Marriott.

2016 Residency Graduates

Karen Browning, MD – Ob/Gyn Provider - Center for Obstetrics and Gynecology
Elizabeth Connor, MD – Gyn/Onc Fellowship – Cleveland Clinic
Stephen Fiascone, MD – Gyn/Onc Fellowship – Brigham & Women’s/Harvard
Valerie Flores, MD – REI Fellowship – Yale University
Erin Hartnett, MD – Gyn/Onc Fellowship – University of Pittsburgh
Alisse Hauspurg, MD – MFM Fellowship – University of Pittsburgh
Warren J. Huber, MD, PhD – REI Fellowship – Women & Infants/Brown
Jeffrey Sperling, MD, MS – MFM Fellowship – University of California at San Francisco

2016 Fellowship Graduates

Catherine Albright, MD (MFM) – University of Washington, Seattle, Washington
Rebecca Kwait, MD (Breast) – Exeter Hospital, New Hampshire
Elizabeth Lokich, MD (Gyn/Onc) – University of New Mexico Cancer Center
Kavita Mishra, MD (Urogyn) – University of California at San Francisco
Jonathan Shaw, MB, Bch, BSc (Urogyn) – Tenwek Hospital, Kenya – Samaritan’s Purse/Christian Mission Hospitals
Women & Infants gynecologic oncologist earns prestigious research funding

The Patient-Centered Outcomes Research Institute (PCORI) Board of Governors awarded more than $2.7 million in contracted funding to Katina Robison, MD, Res ’06, Fel ’09, a gynecologic oncologist with the Program in Women’s Oncology at Women & Infants Hospital of Rhode Island, a Care New England hospital, for the study “Cancer of the Uterus and Treatment of Stress Incontinence (CUTI).”

Robison was one of 13.18 percent of applicants chosen for the prestigious research funding. Her proposal was one of 46 that PCORI approved for funding to advance the field of comparative clinical effectiveness research and provide patients, health care providers, and other clinical decision makers with information that will help them make better informed choices. These studies were selected through a highly competitive review process in which patients, clinicians and other stakeholders joined clinical scientists to evaluate the proposals.

The CUTI study, which also includes recruitment sites at the University of Alabama and Hartford Hospital, is focused on improving the quality of life for women who undergo surgery for endometrial cancer by screening for and offering treatment of existing stress urinary incontinence (SUI) at the same time as their cancer surgery. This step should also decrease costs for patients and the health care system by combining two surgeries into one.

"We believe that concurrent treatment of endometrial cancer and stress urinary incontinence may improve quality of life, as well as emotional and physical health for women," Robison explains, who adds that the research team also includes Drs. Kyle Wohlrab and Vivian Sung from Women & Infants, Dr. Melissa Clark from the University of Massachusetts and Dr. Chanelle Howe from Brown University.

SUI exists in approximately half of the women with endometrial cancer, which is the fourth most common cancer among American women. While SUI is very common, many women have not discussed their symptoms with a health care provider, and only 25 percent have sought care. This, Robison says, is unfortunate because SUI can severely decrease a woman’s quality of life, sexual function and is often a considerable financial burden.

She and the research team believe that asking basic questions about incontinence before any cancer surgery and then offering treatment of SUI at the time of cancer surgery can help. The study will measure the quality of life reported by women who have both surgeries at the same time, versus those who do not.

The cohort study began enrolling participants in January 2016 and has recruited 92 women from Women & Infants and University of Alabama, recruitment for Hartford Hospital has just begun.

Dario Roque, MD returns to Women & Infants

On August 1, 2016, Dario Roque, MD, OB/GYN Res ’13, joined the Program in Women’s Oncology in the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology at Women & Infants Hospital and The Warren Alpert Medical School of Brown University.

Dr. Roque completed his residency at Women & Infants/Brown University in 2013 and earned the David H. Nichols Excellence in Pelvic Surgery Award, the Administrative Chief Resident Award, the Society of Laparoendoscopic Surgeons Minimally Invasive Surgery Award, and two Excellence in Teaching awards. He recently completed his fellowship in gynecologic oncology at the University of North Carolina with similar accolades.

We are thrilled to welcome Dr. Roque back to Women & Infants and to Brown!
Women & Infants graduates working to treat substance use disorder in pregnancy.
Melissa Sherman, MD, OB/GYN Res ’08

Neonatal Abstinence Program
The program at Beverly Hospital will be providing an Integrated Care Program that will incorporate medication assisted therapy along with prenatal care, psychiatric care, case management, and NAS treatment. The ultimate goal is to decrease the cost of NAS by improving prenatal care and maternity/postpartum services for pregnant women with opioid use disorder.

Seventy expecting moms struggling with addiction will soon get the support they need to navigate the harmful combination of pregnancy and substance abuse. Nicole Sczekan understands the danger—and lack of support for pregnant moms with addiction—firsthand.

Sczekan, a certified nurse midwife at Beverly Hospital, often felt helpless during her daughter’s ongoing battle with opiate addiction. Her daughter’s pregnancy presented a window of opportunity. “I was seeing that this was the opportune time to intervene because she was going to her medical appointments and she wanted to do the right thing,” said Sczekan. “I was so frustrated for her that treatment for addiction wasn’t incorporated into prenatal care.” Sczekan’s daughter, now 25, did start methadone maintenance treatment while pregnant to help her stay off heroin. Six years later—despite some ups and downs—she’s still clean.

Drawing on her own experience, Sczekan saw an opportunity to do more to help women like her daughter as well as the opioid epidemic’s smallest victims: their babies. Along with two colleagues—Melissa Sherman, MD, Res ’08 an ob/gyn, and Jennifer Lee, MD, a neonatologist—she designed a program to identify at-risk moms and support them with judgment-free care during pregnancy and after, giving them and their babies the best chance to thrive. The program was recently awarded a $1 million grant from the Massachusetts Health Policy Commission.

Statistics paint a grim picture of the effects of the opioid epidemic on mothers and babies. An August report from the CDC revealed the number of babies born in the country addicted to opioids has tripled over the past 15 years. Beverly Hospital admitted 68 infants and 67 mothers between 2014 and 2015 for treatment of neonatal abstinence syndrome (NAS), the long-term effects of which can include delayed physical or emotional development, low IQ and seizures caused by withdrawal.

Only 61 percent of the mothers who were admitted to the hospital for NAS treatment had prenatal care in their first trimester, while 15 percent had no prenatal care at all. Yet studies show that the babies of women who do have regular prenatal care, maintenance medication and addiction treatment experience less severe NAS or no symptoms at all, Sczekan said.

“The main strategy of the program is acceptance and having a safe place where they can come. Most moms want help, but they’re afraid.” Sczekan said. “They believe they can stop on their own, and by the time they realize they need help they are often several months pregnant. We want women to know this is a safe place to find help as soon as they find out they are pregnant. We want them to know there is hope for recovery.”

Through the new program, clinicians will follow pregnant women from their first prenatal appointment to a year after giving birth with an integrated approach including medication-assisted therapy, group and individual therapy, standard prenatal care, childbirth and childcare education, and frequent follow-ups after birth.

“One key piece of it is the medication-assisted therapy,” Sherman said. “If you’re going to try to fight all these things at once, the obstetrician should be prescribing the medication—either buprenorphine or methadone. We understand the stresses and strains that come with all pregnancies.”

Additionally, group and individual counseling that is gender-specific can help women learn to cope with the underlying cause of their drug use, which may be anxiety, depression, abuse, trauma or simply an inability to cope with their current situation.

Postpartum follow up-care is also critical to long-term success. >>
"With the follow-up clinic, we will be able to stay involved and to better see what the impact is," said Lee, one of the program’s co-founders. "Right now, a lot of the moms don’t follow up after they have their babies. If we can keep moms in treatment for the first year, we can improve their use of other services like early intervention."

The project is still in the planning stages, the first patients are expected to be on-boarded by the end of the year. Plans include caring for 70 women over the 27-month grant period.

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Agatha Critchfield, MD, OB/GYN Res ’10  
Pregnancy treated as a moment for recovery through University of Kentucky Healthcare’s PATHways Clinic

Agatha Critchfield, MD, OB/GYN Res ’10, the director of PATHways and an obstetrician/gynecologist at UK HealthCare Women’s Health in Kentucky, was overwhelmed by the cases of prenatal opioid use she saw in her practice. Noting that there were few evidence-based opioid treatment programs designed for pregnant women, she began PATHways, a comprehensive opioid maintenance treatment program for pregnant women recovering from addiction at the Polk-Dalton Clinic. The program integrates treatment for addiction with prenatal care, counseling and a supportive peer network.


Recent lectureship presentations:
On May 12, 2016, Bruce Blumberg, MD, PhD, professor of developmental and cell biology, School of Biological Sciences; professor of pharmaceutical sciences and professor of biomedical engineering at the Henry Samueli School of Engineering, University of California, Irvine presented “Transgenerational inheritance of prenatal obesogen-exposure” at the annual Saphier Family Lecture.

On July 28, 2016, Ginger Breedlove, PhD, CNM, APRBN, FACNM, president of the American College of Nurse Midwives, professor of graduate programs at the Eleanor Wade Custer School of Nursing, Shenandoah University, Winchester, VA, presented “Collaboration, communication & collegiality: Key levers to creating a culture of safety” at the 2nd annual Dr. Diane Angelini Lecture on Interprofessional Education & Collaboration.

Upcoming events
Please see list below of upcoming events that may be of interest to you. For more information about our hospital-based lectures, please contact us via email at dflinn@wihri.org.

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<td>Women &amp; Infants Hospital</td>
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<td>Ellen Zane, MA</td>
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<td>Management Pearls of Wisdom: Lessons Learned Along the Way</td>
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<td>November 3, 2016</td>
<td>Women &amp; Infants Hospital</td>
<td>Annual March of Dimes Prematurity Summit</td>
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<td>Jennifer Culhane, PhD, MPH</td>
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<td>Drexel University College of Medicine/Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia</td>
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<td>Disparities That Can Contribute to Preterm Birth</td>
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<td>November 10, 2016</td>
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<td>Annual David Nichols Memorial Lecture</td>
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<td>John B. Gebhart, MD</td>
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In Memorium

Marshall Taylor, MD  
August 16, 1925 – March 20, 2016  
Women & Infants Medical Staff  
Active: 1960 – 2005  
Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology  
Clinical Instructor: 1977 – 1982  
Clinical Assistant Professor: 1982 – 2001  
Clinical Assistant Professor (Emeritus): 2001 – 2016

Wagih A. Hanna, MD  
May 1, 1932 – May 10, 2016  
Women & Infants OB/GYN Residency Program Graduate – 1972  
Women & Infants Medical Staff: 1977 – 2016

John Bert, MD  
Women & Infants OB/GYN Residency Program Graduate – 1978  
Women & Infants Medical Staff  
Active: 1978 – 2016  
Department of Obstetrics & Gynecology  
Clinical Instructor: 1983 – 1991  
Clinical Assistant Professor: 1991 – 2016