

American Medical Women's Association

President's Message

Dear AMWA Members,



It is with some nostalgia that I write my last column for the year. What a year it has been to commemorate AMWA's 95th anniversary—from healthcare reform to the opening of our Legacy Exhibit in Philadelphia and our continued work in gender equity, women's health, and the professional development of women in medicine.

Last month, Dr. Kim Templeton, Dr. Claudia Morrissey, and I had the privilege of speaking at a parallel event for the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) at the United Nations. How enlightening it was to hear about women physicians from an international perspective and to compare experiences abroad with ours at home. During the CSW events, we had the honor of meeting Dr. Jean Shinoda Bolen, internationally renowned author, psychiatrist, and activist who is calling for a UN sponsored 5th World Conference on Women (5WCW), Dr. Josephine Ojiambo, past-president of the Kenya Medical Women's Association and the Kenyan Ambassador to the U.N., and Actress Geena Davis, who is working to eliminate gender stereotyping in the media. We were inspired by the vision of UN Women, Executive Director Michelle Bachelet—Executive Director for UN Women, former president of Chile *and a woman physician*—"My own experience has taught me that there is no limit to what women can do—from those who support their families in the hardest of circumstances to those who become ministers of gender affairs, health, finance, foreign affairs—or heads of state. If we are to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, we must do even better in tapping into women's strength, women's industry, and women's wisdom... I am determined that UN Women will offer a new dynamic to the global dialogue on gender equality, and bring new energy, drawing on multiple talents, and bringing together men

and women from different countries and communities in a shared endeavor." We, in AMWA, are committed to that same goal.

I would also like to remember our colleagues in Japan who have been dealing with so much devastation from the recent earthquake. I have been in contact with the President of the Japanese Medical Women's Association, our sister organization within the Medical Women's International Association and have extended our offer of help.

As I reflect back on all that AMWA has accomplished this year, I am reminded again that none of this would have been possible without the dedication of so many AMWA leaders who after taking care of their own patients and families have made time to help further AMWA's initiatives and priorities. I want to personally thank our many committee members and chairs, board of directors, headquarters staff, and intern for the outstanding work that they have done this year. It has been an honor and privilege to serve with these leaders and to be AMWA's president during this historic 95th Anniversary Year.

With warm regards,

Eliza Chin, MD, MPH
AMWA President

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Featured Physician

Featured Physician - Laura Helfman, MD

(Clinical Instructor in Pediatrics, TC Thompson's Children's ED, Chattanooga, TN) (Co-Chair, American Women's Hospitals Service (AWHS))



Tell us about yourself.

I am a Board Certified Emergency Physician. I graduated from the Medical College of Pennsylvania (now Drexel) in 1985. Initially, I worked as a primary care physician and then completed an EM residency in 1993. I am an avid whitewater and outdoor enthusiast which has shaped my career in a quite unusual way. I am married to a teacher and did not have children because I developed lupus in my thirties, which is thankfully in full remission.

Tell us about your practice.

Rather than having one position, I work part time in several Emergency Departments in Chattanooga, TN and surrounding areas, with most of my time in TC Thompson's Children's ED. I work part time so that during the spring, summer and fall, I can work as a full time whitewater raft guide both in TN and in CO. I am also a lead instructor with Wilderness Medical Associates which teaches Wilderness First Responder courses to outdoor professionals. This smorgasbord of careers, gives me lots of flexibility which allows my husband and I to travel and go on adventures during all of his school vacations. Recently, I joined the Disaster Management Assistance Team which the government deploys to national and recently international disasters. I have volunteered at one of the AWHS clinics in the past and have volunteered over the years at women's clinics and shelters both in a medical and non-medical capacity,

What have been the major challenges you have faced as a woman physician?

By the time I started medical school in 1981, things had started to improve greatly for women. My school was 60% women and had many women professors and attendings because it was the former Women's Medical

College, however other schools were approaching 30% and, of course, this has continued to improve. However, I started medical school as a vocal feminist activist which meant that I was often considered to be "too extreme." The prevailing sentiment was, now that you've made all these gains as women in medicine, just be a doctor. I felt then and still feel that there are many more hurdles to accomplish in terms of how women fit in given our unique needs as child bearers and our unique perspective as nurturers and caregivers. In the early days, I was committed to change immediately, and was very out spoken. This caused me conflict during school and residency. I don't regret a bit of it, however there were times when my commitment to being a doctor was questioned which caused me grief. Luckily, I found great mentors among other activist women both in and out of medicine which allowed me to develop into the integrated woman physician that I am today.

What do you find most satisfying about being a doctor?

I enjoy interacting with patients and families and making a difference. I may not be the fastest or brightest clinician, but I know that even in the busy environment of the ED, with all of its difficulties, that my patients are cared for both medically and emotionally. We need a paradigm shift back toward the caring side while still utilizing all the gains in technology and advances in research if we are to resurrect the profession of medicine back to a respected position. I feel that the public's perception of doctors is that we only care about money, and looking at many of my colleagues sometimes I think it is true. As long as I can keep my cynicism and callousness to a minimum, I can enjoy what I do despite the crumbling of the system around me.

How long have you been a member of AMWA?

I have been a member of AMWA since 1981 which was during my 1st year of medical school. I became a National Student Coordinator during my third year and stayed active on several committees. I am currently co-chair of AWHS after having been inactive for a while.

What has AMWA meant to you?

AMWA has been so many things. It has provided an incredible support system, a place both to mentor and be mentored as well as a place to advocate for changes. AMWA allows you to let your guard down in a system that favors men's stoicism. It taught me early on that it was OK to be a physician with women's sensibilities and I have especially enjoyed imparting and encouraging that in our student members.

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Commission on the Status of Women

AMWA represented at the 55th Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) at the United Nations

The Medical Women's International Association (MWIA), AMWA, and the National Council of Women USA co-sponsored a parallel event during the 55th Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) at the United Nations. The session, entitled "Medicine: The Pink Collar Profession," was organized by Dr. Padmini Murthy and Dr. Satty Keswani (MWIA NGO Representatives to the United Nations). Speakers included Dr. Shelley Ross (MWIA Secretary General, Canada), Professor Afua Hesse (MWIA President, Africa), Dr. Eliza Chin (AMWA President), Dr. Gail Beck (MWIA Treasurer, Canada), Dr. Eleanor Nwadinobi (Past President, Nigerian Medical Women's Association), Dr. Kimberly Templeton (President, Bone and Joint Decade and AMWA Board Member), Ms. Mary Singletary (President, National Council of Women USA), Dr. Claudia Morrissey (MWIA Vice-President North America), and

Dr. Mercedes Viteri (MWIA Vice-President Latin America). Other AMWA members in attendance included Dr. Linda Brodsky, Dr. Roberta Gebhard, and Dr. Joyce Braak.

A highlight of the CSW was the launch event for UN Women, *Honouring the Past – Envisioning the Future for Women and Girls*, which was hosted by Ms. Michelle Bachelet, Under-Secretary-General and Executive Director, UN Women. The program of distinguished speakers also included CNN Founder Mr. Ted Turner, UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon, Princess Cristina of Spain, Actresses Geena Davis and Nicole Kidman, news anchor JuJu Chang, and many more. To watch the UN Women Launch, please visit, http://www.unwomen.org/calendar-of-events/?event_id=5.



*Dr. Linda Brodsky (Gender Equity Co-Chair), Dr. Jean Shinoda Bolen (Author of *The Millionth Circle and Goddesses in Every Woman*), and Dr. Eliza Chin (AMWA President). Dr. Bolen is calling for a UN sponsored 5th World Conference on Women (5WCW)*



Dr. Josephine Ojiambo (Ambassador from Kenya to the U.N.), Dr. Eliza Chin, and Dr. Padmini Murthy.



(standing left to right) Dr. Eleanor Nwadinobi, Dr. Shelley Ross, Professor Afua Hesse, Dr. Claudia Morrissey, Dr. Padmini Murthy and Dr. Satty Keswani. (seated) UN Women Executive Director Michelle Bachelet.

Commission on the Status of Women

Address given by Dr. Chin at a parallel event during the 55th Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) at the United Nations

I am honored to share with you today the history of the American Medical Women's Association (AMWA) – the oldest, national, multi-specialty organization of women physicians in the United States. Last year we celebrated our 95th Anniversary. We are one of 45 National Associations within the MWIA, the umbrella organization that joins women physicians all over the world and is the NGO represented here at the CSW.

It was through the efforts of Dr. Bertha Van Hoosen, a prominent Chicago obstetrical surgeon, that AMWA was founded on November 18, 1915, notably 6 decades after Dr. Elizabeth Blackwell became the first woman doctor in America. Back then, many in the medical community—including the women – questioned the need for a national organization that was solely based on gender. Under the astute leadership of Dr. Van Hoosen, AMWA became a unified voice for women physicians, and by 1917 when the United States entered World War I, the organization had found a unifying cause to rally behind.

Women physicians were eager to serve their country during the war effort. But unlike men physicians and even nurses, women physicians were excluded from becoming commissioned officers in the military. Ultimately, it was this single unifying issue—the exclusion of women physicians—that galvanized AMWA and solidified the organization.

Not to be deterred, the women physicians went anyways. They went by providing voluntary medical relief to the war-ravaged areas of Europe, setting up hospitals and clinics in France, Serbia, and Greece. This program within AMWA, known as the American Women's Hospitals Service, would spread to other countries, providing humanitarian relief during times of famine, civil unrest, and religious persecution, and continuing even to the present day to support health care in underserved communities around the world.

It would not be until World War II that women finally did receive the right to become commissioned officers – a victory that AMWA helped win under the leadership of then President, Dr. Emily Dunning Barringer.

Over the past 9 1/2 decades, AMWA has been the vision and voice of women in medicine here in the United States. AMWA has advocated for birth control, freedom

of reproductive choice, women's health education and research, anti-tobacco legislation, prevention of violence against women, healthcare reform, the elimination of health disparities, and the importance of gender specific medicine. AMWA has also played a pivotal role in promoting the health of women and children in America through preventive medicine programs and disease awareness campaigns. AMWA's continuing education courses have helped practitioners deliver better medical care to their women patients.

AMWA has also supported the advancement of women in medicine by addressing such issues as the glass ceiling effect which has led to the disproportionate representation of women within academic medicine, the challenges of work-life balance, the mentorship of women physicians, and gender discrimination. Women physicians on average still earn significantly less than their male colleagues, and a new study shows that the gender gap in physician starting salaries is growing. So the work of AMWA remains as relevant today as it did in 1915.

AMWA continues to invest resources in bringing up the next generation of women physicians through generous scholarships, grants, and mentoring programs for medical students. A student division of AMWA was established in 1957 and a resident division in 2010 -- to meet the unique needs of women in training. Entering women medical students now comprise 47.9 % of all first year medical students. These young women hold the hope and promise of our future in medicine.

Most important in the 21st Century is the need for collaboration with other national organizations – to share ideas, resources, and expertise. Last year, AMWA convened a Networking Alliance with over a dozen medical organizations, and together launched a webinar series focused on the professional development of women physicians. Plans are underway for a joint grant initiative to address the issues of gender equity in medicine. This need for collaboration is crucial both within countries and among countries. AMWA is proud to be here during these two monumental weeks of the CSW to stand with the MWIA and so many other NGO's to work for the advancement of women all over the world.

**In the early years, AMWA was known as the Medical Women's National Association (MWNA)*

Gender Gap in Physician Salaries

Gender Gap in Physician Salaries is Widening

Leaders of the American Medical Women's Association are concerned by findings of a recent study showing that starting salaries for women physicians were \$16,819 lower than their male counterparts. (Dr. Lo Sasso et. al., *Health Affairs* 30:2, 2011) Even more alarming was the fact that this gender gap worsened over the 10 years reported in the study, 1998-2008.

The authors analyzed data from the Center for Health Workforce Studies at the State University of New York at Albany based on surveys of 8,233 graduating resident physicians in New York State between the years 1999-2008. Using starting salaries only for physicians who would work primarily in "patient care and clinical practice" and who had accepted an actual job, they controlled for most of the usual confounding variables that have made previous studies less powerful. With regression analysis, they studied 45 specialties within medicine, controlling for hours worked, practice location, immigration status, and age, among other variables. Experience, rank, and productivity were not confounding factors as all subjects had just finished their training. The results of the study showed that a significant gap existed every year and increased over time. These results persisted even after controlling for practice type and specialty, and tailoring of hours for family responsibilities (with the exception of two specialties in which women earned more than their male counterparts, general surgery and gastroenterology).

Although the authors postulated that this gap was due to women choosing more flexible physician practices, we know from prior studies that women physicians often do get paid less than their male counterparts for the same job. Gender discrimination still exists within the echelons of medicine, and gender stereotyping frequently leads to the devaluation of women physicians. To this end, AMWA's work is far from over. We will continue to educate and mentor women physicians, providing them with the support and skills to counteract gender bias, negotiate effectively, recognize sexism, and ultimately, to eliminate gender inequality.

To read the original article, please visit <http://content.healthaffairs.org/content/30/2/193>.

More commentary from AMWA Gender Equity Co-Chairs, Dr. Linda Brodsky and Dr. Roberta Gebhard and AMWA President Dr. Eliza Chin is available in the *British Medical Journal* and *Medscape*.

For more information or to join AMWA's Gender Equity Task Force, please visit:

www.amwa-doc.org

<http://www.expeditingtheinevitable.com>

<http://thebrodskyblog.com>

American Heart Association Issues New Guidelines

by Janice Werbinski, MD

For the first time in 4 years, the American Heart Association has issued new guidelines for risk assessment, prevention, evaluation and treatment of heart disease in women. The guidelines encompass a new definition for "high risk," outline newly adopted risk factors associated with history of pregnancy complications, recommendations for glycemic control, and new guidelines on the use of aspirin therapy in women for prevention. They also address the questionable benefit for the use of statins in women with elevated CRP levels. The most notable recommendation is the call by Dr. Lori Mosca for future research to include not only sex specific efficacy analyses,

but sex specific adverse drug reactions and risk/benefit profiles. She also makes a plea for "a dose of reality," recognizing the need to reflect what can be accomplished in the real world, rather than what is achievable in clinical trials – a paradigm shift from "evidence-based to effectiveness-based decision making." Learn more here about the guidelines here: http://www.heart.org/HEARTORG/News/News_UCM_001145_SubHomePage.jsp. For more information on sex and gender differences in CVD in women, visit the Advancing Women's Health Initiative at www.Medpedia.com/groups/444, and to access all site content become a "member."

Featured Physician - Laura Helfman, MD (continued)

What advice would you give to women going into medicine today?

Remember that a career in medicine is about making a difference in the quality of people's lives which often means helping them deal with illness, not cure. There are so many difficulties that have nothing to do with medicine such as health care delivery issues, insurance issues and

societal dysfunction issues, that money and high salaries cannot be a prime motivator. Enjoy what you do even on the hard days and you will be alright. Make use of support systems and allow yourself to develop your own medical persona, not what is expected. Make time for yourself and your family and friends and contribute to the greater good whenever you can.

A Message from the First Lady

A Message from First Lady Michelle Obama on Childhood Obesity



As we've tackled childhood obesity over the past year, we've realized again and again that this is not a stand-alone issue. It's bound up in every issue we face – from health care to education to the way our cities are designed. There's no one, single answer that will fix it,

no magic bullet. So we knew that if we're going to solve this problem in a generation – and we are – we'd need to come at it from every direction...

Health care providers directly impact the health of our children. They have the opportunity to make a real difference in solving the problem of childhood obesity. Each encounter is an opportunity to help families understand the importance of good nutrition and physical activity—from their earliest moments of life until adulthood. Let's Move! is strengthened by the individual efforts of all providers, but even more so when they work with patients and families, in clinics, practices, homes, schools and neighborhoods to achieve the goal of a healthier lifestyle.

First Lady Michelle Obama

Help support this initiative by educating your patients about the prescription for healthy living. <http://www.letsmove.gov>. Please send related stories or photos to amwahelper@gmail.com.

To hear a message from the First Lady, visit <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RyCyfmFwr5s>

AMWA-Sponsored Health Education Literature

You and Your Family, a biannual magazine for expectant parents that is distributed in offices nationwide. AMWA and CW Publishing

Think Before You Drink, an educational pamphlet that discusses the dangers of alcohol poisoning, especially in women. AMWA and the National Consumer's League

Vitamin D and Your Bone Health, an educational flier that discusses the need for Vitamin D to optimize bone health. AMWA, U.S. Bone and Joint Decade, and Healthy Women.

To obtain copies of these publications, please contact associatedirector@amwa-doc.org.

March 8, 2011 - the 100th Anniversary of International Women's Day

International Women's Day was first celebrated in Europe in 1911 as a rally for women's rights and continues to the present day as a global celebration on March 8 by women all over the world. This year's celebration in Washington DC was held in conjunction with the CARE Conference, a 2-day advocacy conference which focused on women's economic empowerment. Keynote speakers at the conference included Melinda Gates and Former First Lady Laura Bush.



AMWA members Dr. Roberta Gebhard, Ryan Smith, and Dr. Eliza Chin and their daughters celebrate the 100th Anniversary of International Women's Day at the CARE Conference in Washington DC. Pictured here with renowned performers Sarah Darling, India.Arie, Michael Franti, and Crystal Bowersox.

AMWA Receives Bequest from Estate of Virginia Badger, MD

AMWA thanks and remembers Dr. Virginia Badger, who passed at the age of 93 on October 11, 2009. Dr. Badger was a true pioneer in medicine. As one of the first women to be board certified as an orthopedic surgeon, she worked with patients at Barnes Hospital, Shiners Hospital and Carry Tingley Hospital and later served in the Army. She retired as a full colonel from the Army and did locum tenens work for ten years before retiring. AMWA truly appreciates the generous gift she bequeathed to us and will use it to fulfill the mission of advancing women in medicine.

Members and other friends of AMWA can also make gifts via their estates. Legal counsel or a financial planning expert is recommended to assist you in determining how best to make the type of gift that is the most tax advantageous for you and your estate's beneficiaries.

Dr. Marlene Cuititar – RIMWA's 2011 Woman Physician of the Year



The Rhode Island Medical Women's Association (RIMWA) has recognized Dr. Marlene Cuititar as the 2011 Woman Physician of the Year. She will be honored at the 30th Anniversary Celebration of RIMWA on Tuesday, May 3, 2011 at the Providence Marriott Hotel, One Orms Street, Providence, RI. For more information, please contact Jane Coutu at (401) 331-3207. Dr. Cuititar is Clinical Assistant Professor of Surgery, at the Warren Alpert School of Medicine at Brown University and a member of the AMWA Board of Directors.

Misty Richards receives the AMA Foundation 2011 Leadership Award



Misty C. Richards, immediate past AMWA Student President received the American Medical Association (AMA) Foundation's 2011 Leadership Award. This award provides medical students, residents/fellows and early career physicians from around the country with special training to develop their skills as future leaders in organized medicine and community affairs. Recipients of the award are recognized for demonstrating outstanding non-clinical leadership skills in advocacy, community service and education. A Fulbright Scholar, Ms. Richards is one of only 24 medical students in the nation to receive this leadership award.

The AMWA Hour Radio Series

PRN Media, with host Dr. Vidushi Babber, sponsored a five-week radio series, *The AMWA Hour*, which featured AMWA physicians on the following topics.

Dr. Linda Clever – Renew

Dr. Linda Brodsky and Dr. Roberta Gebhard – Gender Equity

Dr. Theresa Rohr-Kirchgraber – Leadership in the Kitchen

Dr. Colleen Hunsaker – Secrets of Anti-Aging

Dr. Neelum Aggarwal – Cultural Competence

These shows are available 24/7 on demand. To listen, please visit <http://www.blogtalkradio.com/prnhealth>

Books by AMWA Physicians

The Color of Atmosphere: One Doctor's Journey In and Out of Medicine

By Dr. Maggie Kozel

A rare, intimate portrayal of one pediatrician's journey to become a doctor and her heart-wrenching decision years later to eventually leave medicine. Told with candor and wit, Dr. Kozel's memoir is a powerful reminder of the complex forces that shape medical practice today.

The White House Doctor: My Patients Were Presidents

By Dr. Connie Mariano

Dr. Mariano was the first military woman to become the White House Physician to the President and the first woman Director of the White House Medical Unit. This memoir chronicles her life journey and the extraordinary experience of being physician to President George H. W. Bush, President Bill Clinton, and the First Families.



American Medical Women's Association
 100 North 20th Street, Suite 400
 Philadelphia, PA 19103-1462

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American Medical Women's Association
 The Vision and Voice of Women in Medicine since 1915

AMWA's 96th Annual Meeting held in conjunction with Women's Health: The 19th Annual Congress

April 1-3, 2011 with Advocacy Day March 31
 Crystal Gateway Marriott, Arlington, VA

Special guests Surgeon General Dr. Regina Benjamin and Commissioner of Food and Drugs, Dr. Margaret Hamburg

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Helen Wang, MD	Editor – Publication Chair
Eliza Lo Chin, MD	Editor
Lindsay Groff, MBA	Executive Director lgroff@fernley.com
Sarah Hagy	Associate Director shagy@fernley.com
Jason Harbonic	Associate Director jharbonic@fernley.com

100 North 20th Street, Suite 400
 Philadelphia, PA 19103-1462
 Phone: (215) 320-3716
 Toll Free (866) 564-2483
 Fax: (215) 564-2175

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