

AMWA Connections

Message From The President

This article is excerpted from Dr. Elinor Christiansen's inaugural address at the 86th Annual Meeting.

The Chinese use the same character for "danger" and for "opportunity." We are living in times of both. The biggest problem in our country today is lack of access to health care. Increasing unemployment, plus recent cuts in Medicare reimbursement, have placed health care out of reach for more Americans than ever before. Many physicians across the country have closed their practices to Medicare patients. Our health care system is in crisis and is a national disgrace.

My vision for AMWA is for this organization of women physicians to take a leadership

role in proposing a new health care system, which includes everyone from birth to death and re-establishes the physician-patient relationship, responsive to patient needs.

I am a person of vision, a "possibility" thinker, always wanting to implement new solutions to old problems. Some may call me an "optimist" or an "idealist," but in reality I am a pragmatist, eager to implement solutions which I *know* from my own personal experience are possible and affordable.

Through forty years as a practicing physician, I gained wisdom from my diverse experiences. I spent nine years as Medical Director of the Student Health Service at the University of Denver, administering a mandatory health plan for all 8,000 stu-



Elinor T. Christiansen, MD

dents. We provided patient choice and quality care, including preventive care and acute care. The system worked because everyone shared the cost and the risk. Prior to my retirement, the student government selected the Student Health Service for the Outstanding Service Award, the ultimate compliment.

continued on page 4

Women in Medicine: Adapting to Change

AMWA's 2002 Interim Meeting, "Women in Medicine: Adapting To Change" will be held June 21-23, 2002 at the Hilton McLean, Tysons Corner in McLean, VA.

This year AMWA's Interim Meeting will address physicians adapting to a changing environment. Physicians need insights into the realities of how those changes have affected their careers, and the leadership skills needed to manage change. Invited speakers will present on physician career changes in medicine, practice management issues, and professional development programs.

In addition to the educational sessions, the following events will be held:

- ◆ AMWA Board of Directors and committee meetings
- ◆ AMWA Foundation Board Meeting & Corporate Partner Roundtable
- ◆ International Women in Medicine Hall of Fame Gala

Mark your calendar now to attend this valuable event!

For more information on the Interim Meeting, please contact AMWA Meetings at 703-838-0500, fax 703-549-3864, or e-mail: meetings@amwa-doc.org. ◆

In this issue

Annual Meeting Highlights	2
2002-2003 Board of Directors	2
50 Years as a Woman Physician	3
New Career Services Benefit	3
Student Senate	4
AMWA Awards	5



Annual Meeting Highlights

*Diana J. Galindo, MD and Diane Helentjaris, MD
co-chairs of the Program Committee*

This year's annual meeting once again defined AMWA as a premiere source of information on women's health. Keynote speaker, Dr. Pamela Peeke, started off our meeting by discussing stress and the biological affects on the body. The program presented attendees with more than 30 workshops on a wide range of topics including bioterrorism, coronary heart disease, ovarian cancer, HRT, osteoarthritis and rheumatoid arthritis, and post-traumatic stress disorder.

In addition to workshops on women's health, AMWA offered a medical practice management institute, developed in partnership with Medical Group Management Association (MGMA). The workshops focused on practice management issues vital to today's woman physician.

The annual meeting continues to serve as our primary venue for conducting Association and Foundation business. The House of Delegates debated important issues regarding gender neutral membership and the composition of the Board of Directors. The biggest change is the fact that the House of Delegates voted to



Drs. Silva and Christiansen with the Plenary session speakers

discontinue the House as the primary voting body for the organization. Beginning in 2003, all AMWA members attending the 2003 Annual Meeting will be invited to take part in the decision making process in our first Meeting of the Members.

Constructing a network of colleagues is an integral part of professional development, and in keeping with the meeting's theme there were several social events including a welcome reception and luncheon held in the exhibit hall giving attendees the opportunity to interact with colleagues while learning about the organizations exhibiting. The meeting's networking events culminated on Saturday night with the President's Reception and Banquet.

Mark your calendar now to attend AMWA's 87th Annual Meeting, to be held January 23-26, 2003 in Atlanta, GA. ♦

2002–2003 AMWA Board of Directors

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*Allison Dean
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Members*

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the Members*

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*Linda Yazvac, MD
Regional Governor–Region VI*

*Georgia B. Nolph, MD
Regional Governor–Region VII*



*From Left: Past President, O. Silva, MD;
President, E. Christiansen, MD;
President-elect, L. Epstein, MD*

*Mary Jo Jacobs, MD
Regional Governor–Region VIII*

*Laurel Waters, MD
Regional Governor–Region IX*

*Christina Nicolaidis, MD, PhD
Regional Governor–Region X*

Looking Back: *Fifty Years as a Woman Physician*

In the final segment of this series, Dr. Justin, a retired family practice physician from Colorado, looks back at changes in the medical field during her years as a physician.

*Renate G. Justin, MD,
AMWA member since 1975*

When I was in practice, I used to schedule annual physical examinations and new patients for 45 to 60 minutes. Often 'talks' were on the appointment books for an hour; depression, marital problems and family conflict were addressed during these times. House calls were a routine part of my weekly schedule. I never felt they were a waste of time. A visit on the patient's territory always gave me a deeper understanding and greater insight into their life.

In my practice, office personnel knew patients by first name and we knew their families. Patients would stay with the office two to three decades. I enjoyed office-based research and the nurse practitioners, who were my associates, were enthusiastic participants in these efforts. The office ambience, time spent with patients, patient turnover and of course method of payment, all changed funda-

mentally with the arrival of medical insurance.

After 35 years, I left my office to join my daughter in her practice and I ended my career working with an HMO. Reflecting on which medications, immunizations and equipment were available in 1950 and in 2000, I am astounded at the pace at which medicine has evolved. More than that, I am grateful to have been part of this evolution. The practice of medicine has brought great joy and satisfaction to my life. I have especially rejoiced in the bright young women students I have taught, and my women colleagues who have chosen medicine as their life's work. Looking back inevitably leads to comparisons. The practice of medicine has powerful healing tools at its disposal today, but has lost the intimate doctor-patient relationship that in the past enriched each day in the office. It would be ideal if we could resurrect this human connectedness without giving up the advances the medical field has gained.

During my tenure as a physician it was more important to me to practice good medicine than to spend my time fighting anti-female sentiments. That does not mean that I did not occasionally take a stand. I have tried to help women students by encouraging and supporting them both in medical and premedical school, as well as residency. This effort was quite rewarding and effective in establishing women in medicine.

Women today still face problems because of their gender. They often do not receive the full approval and encouragement for their choice that young men receive from their families and mentors. The road to certain jobs, whether it be president of the hospital staff or president of the medical school, are cluttered with more obstacles for women than for men. Sexual harassment has not disappeared. There are, however, many more women practicing now than 50 years ago, the uphill road is less arduous, and reaching the summit is still greatly rewarding. ♦

Put Your Career In Motion *New Career Service Benefit*

Major national job searching tools are available to AMWA members, making job hunting easier and more efficient. ResumeMatch and JobMatch, two easy-to-use tools targeted directly for women in medicine, are available at AMWA Online.

ResumeMatch is perfect for both active and passive job seekers. Take the effort out of job searching by providing your CV to employers, who search the site and contact you directly. More than a standard job board, JobMatch is an easy way to find job openings that are posted by top employers only for AMWA members. You can search job listings by such criteria as state location, position title, technical skills and more!

There is no obligation or cost to participate in ResumeMatch or JobMatch. Put your career in motion today with AMWA by going to www.amwa-doc.org or www.amwaonline.org.

Student Senate

Allison Dean, NSC
University of South Carolina, MIII

As a medical student from a small school in the conservative Southeast, I always welcome the chance to be surrounded by like-minded individuals. The AMWA national conference provides the opportunity to meet with medical professionals who are interested in women's health and women in medicine. The conference seems to reaffirm my interest in medicine. Interacting with other AMWA members is incredibly empowering and reminds me why I was drawn to the medical profession in the first place. I would like to share two of my experiences at the conference which highlight some of the benefits AMWA has to offer for medical students at any stage of their careers.

Currently I am in my third-year of school, struggling with the decision of which residency to pursue. My main interest is in women's health; unfortunately (or fortunately) there are many paths which one could follow to become a women's health advocate. At the conference I spoke with a wide variety of physicians: an internist who focuses on women's health research, OB/GYN's who are interested in surgery as well as those interested in primary care, and family doctors whose patients are mostly women.

Discussing career options with these women who are at various stages in their careers and represent diverse geographic regions has helped me gain a better picture of what my options can be. Most importantly, I was reminded that there are many ways to contribute to the field of women's health, and I can choose my path as I progress.

The student track on Saturday afternoon had information that was helpful for any student. We had sessions on advocacy, tips for surviving your clinical years, finding female-friendly residency programs, and discussions on stressors related to gender in the medical field. Many of these sessions were led by students, giving us the opportunity to present on a national level. It was also a chance to share ideas with one another and compare experiences. Many of us find that we all have similar frustrations with medical education; these sessions allow us to learn what has and hasn't worked at other schools. We discover that we are not alone in our feelings and can do something to enact change.

I am looking forward to being one of the student voices in AMWA. Gillian Baty and I, as the newly elected National Student Coordinators, hope to help this great organization develop into something even greater. ♦

Message from the President Continued from page 1

Several years later, I joined the clinical faculty of the University of Colorado Medical School, and served as Medical Director and primary care physician for two community health clinics in an underserved area of rural Colorado. This was an "eye-opening" experience. I learned firsthand the barriers to access to health care in our country, since seventy percent of our patients had no health insurance. When an uninsured patient needed a referral, it was nearly impossible to find anyone willing to see them. The first question always asked was, "What insurance does this patient have?" If the patient had no insurance, or not the "right" type of insurance, they could not be seen. These patients refused ambulance rides and refused to go to the emergency room; they could not pay the bills and did not want to lose their car, their home or their life savings. Indeed, medical bills are the number one reason for persons declaring bankruptcy in our country today.

How can we boast of the best medical

system in the world when we have 44 million people who lack insurance, and another 50 million people who are underinsured? Our health care outcomes are among the worst of the developed nations, yet we spend twice as much per capita as any other country. Between 20% and 30% of our health care dollars are going to administration and corporate profit. In contrast, countries with single payer national health plans spend 1% to 2% on administration.

How can universal healthcare become a reality? It will take both physician support and public will, the moral conviction that everyone is entitled to health care, that "health care is a right." Our elected officials need to become convinced of the public will in order to enact laws to establish a universal health plan. Physicians should take the leadership role, looking at models that work well in other countries and proposing solutions for our country. Personally, I am convinced that a universal health care single payer plan is the best and most cost effective solution. I administered such a plan for nine years, so I know it *can* work.

Under my leadership, AMWA will work with other physician organizations and consumer groups toward achieving universal health care. We as physicians *must* take the leadership role, if we want a plan that makes sense and is fair and equitable to everyone. I believe we can achieve universal health care if we have the vision and the will.

Let me close with the eloquent words of the late Cardinal Joseph Bernardin, a leading advocate for health care reform from Chicago, IL, who said, "Health care is an essential safeguard of human life and dignity, and there is an obligation for society to ensure that every person be able to realize this right."

I am looking forward to a challenging and exciting year as your President. Thank you in advance for your help and enthusiastic support as we move forward into the future.

Read the entire address at the AMWA Web site at www.amwa-doc.org. ♦

AMWA Awards

Each year, the American Medical Women's Association presents awards to individuals who have made outstanding contributions to medicine and/or to the Association. We congratulate all of our 2002 award winners and thank all of our members who nominated their peers.

Olga Jonasson, MD, of Chicago, Illinois, Director of Surgical Education at the American College of Surgeons, was presented with the Elizabeth Blackwell Award in recognition of her exceptional achievements in the field of medical science. The Blackwell Award, established in 1949, is given annually to a woman physician who has made outstanding contributions to the cause of women in medicine. For over 40 years, Dr. Jonasson has been paving the way for women surgeons. In the words of Dr. Patricia Numann, former vice president of the American College of Surgeons, "She is the person who made it possible for women to consider a surgical career."

Vicki Seltzer, MD, of New York City, Chairperson of the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology at the Long Island Jewish Medical Center and the North Shore University Hospital in New York, was presented with the Lila A. Wallis Women's Health Award. The Award is given to an individual whose lifetime achievements, accomplishments, motivations, mentorship, energy and enthusiasm for women's health care, education, and research reflect the influence exemplified by Dr. Wallis. Dr. Seltzer was one of the first women in the country to receive board certification in the subspecialty of gynecological oncology and has taught medicine for over 25 years. Dr. Seltzer's emphasis on improving her women patients' well being through pre-



Vicki Seltzer, MD

ventative care led her to found and direct the Ann and Jules Gottlieb Women's Comprehensive Health Center, recently cited by Health Magazine as one of the five best Women's Health Centers in the country.

Estherina Shems, MD, of Wynnwood, PA, was presented with the Bertha VanHoosen Award in recognition of her numerous contributions to AMWA. The VanHoosen Award, established in honor of the founder of AMWA, is presented annually to a woman physician who has demonstrated exceptional leadership and service to the Association. For over 25 years, Dr. Shems has been a strong supporter of AMWA on the local and national levels. She served as an active member of several committees including American Women's Hospital Service, Student Loan and Scholarship and Archives Committees. On the international level, Dr. Shems served many terms as the Medical Women's International Association's (MWIA) National Coordinator to the AMWA Board of Directors and recently served as MWIA's Vice President of the North American Region. Lila Kroser, MD, past president of MWIA, commended her work stating, Dr. Shems "has been a strong supporter, mentor, teacher and friend."

Marianne J. Legato, MD, of New York City, Professor of Clinical Medicine at Columbia University College of Physicians and

Surgeons, was presented with the 2002 Woman in Science Award. The Award is presented to a woman physician who has made exceptional contributions to medical science, especially women's health through research, publications, and leadership in her field. Dr. Legato's outstanding contributions to women's health research include her service to NIH as a charter member of the Advisory Board of the Office of Women's Health and her founding of the Partnership for Women's Health at Columbia University in 1997. The Partnership is widely recognized as the "first collaboration in which academic medicine and the private sector focused on gender-specific medicine" and the diagnosis and treatment of disease as a function of gender.



From Left: Shannon Hawkins, Megan Cooper, Olga Jonasson, MD, Marianne Legato, MD

Nancy Fu, a third year medical school student at the University of California, Los Angeles, was presented with the Janet M. Glasgow Award for best essay identifying a woman physician who has been a significant mentor and role model.

Shannon Hawkins, a fourth year medical school student at Indiana University School of Medicine in Indianapolis, was presented with the Wilhelm-Frankowski Scholarship Award for exceptional community service and participation in AMWA activities.

Ellen Morgenstern, of Fairfax, Virginia, AMWA Foundation Consultant since 1995, was presented with the Camille Mermod Award. The Award is given to a non-physician who has rendered exceptional service to the Association. Former AMWA Foundation Chair, Lesly Mega, MD comments that Ms. Morgenstern's "enthusiasm coupled with her years of experience, exceptional talent in fund raising, and creative ideas set the pace for the AMWA Foundation's success."

Megan A. Cooper, an MD/PhD student at Ohio State University College of Medicine, was presented with the Carol L. Birch Award for exceptional research paper. ♦

Calendar

April 15, 2002

Call for Proposals for 2003 Annual Meeting Deadline

April 30, 2002

Medical Education Loan Application Deadline

Wilhelm-Frankowski Community Service Scholarship Application Deadline

May 31, 2002

Glasgow Essay Award Deadline

June 21-23, 2002

AMWA's 2002 Interim Meeting, McLean, VA (Washington, DC Metro Area)

June 21, 2002

2nd Annual Gala celebrating the International Women in Medicine Hall of Fame, McLean, VA

June 30, 2002

Carroll L. Birch Award (best original student research paper) Deadline

PAMWA Call for Abstracts Deadline

January 23-26, 2003

AMWA's 87th Annual Meeting, "Health Care: The Silent Crisis," Atlanta, GA



American
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Newsletter
Committee
and Staff

Elinor T. Christiansen, MD, *President*

Michele Bloch, MD, PhD, *Vice President,
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Donna Shelley, MD, Chair, *Publications
Committee*

Gillian Baty, *National Student Coordinator*

Allison Dean, *National Student Coordinator*

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American Medical Women's Association
801 North Fairfax Street, Suite 400
Alexandria, VA 22314

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RENATE G. JUSTIN MD
900 WILD CHERRY LN
FORT COLLINS CO 80521-1365

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