Greetings, everyone!

The quarter was, once again, full of productive activity at the CWHR. I'd like to share a few special highlights.

In April, I attended the Advisory Council meeting of the Office of Research on Women’s Health (ORWH). Membership in this group has allowed me to provide input about the national agenda of women's health and sex differences research, and to hear the excellent accomplishments of the ORWH.

Our Scientific Council, comprised of esteemed scientists from across the country, came together in April to hear presentations by several young CWHR researchers, and to discuss the future research directions of the CWHR. The meeting offered interesting opportunities for interaction between some of the brightest scientists working on sex differences research.

In partnership with UCHealth, we also expanded our “Let’s Talk: Conversations About Women’s Health” series to Colorado Springs. This is the first time we’ve hosted the series outside of Denver. With this new expansion, we hope to offer more people the chance to hear about important findings regarding women's health and sex differences research.

Finally, we are relieved and thankful that the National Institutes of Health’s (NIH) budget was not cut for the 2016-2017 fiscal year. Advancements in medical research depend on continued support of organizations like the NIH—the world’s largest funder of biomedical research. The CWHR is proud to play a key role in providing promising young scientists with seed funding, which helps them competitively apply for NIH grants.

Thank you so much for your continued support of the Center for Women’s Health Research.

Sincerely,

Judy Regensteiner, Director
Annual Community Luncheon

Please mark your calendar for the 2017 Center for Women’s Health Research Annual Community Luncheon on October 19, 2017

We are thrilled to host C. Neill Epperson, MD, a leading clinical expert and researcher in mood and behavioral disorders across the lifespan, as this year’s keynote speaker.

Dr. Epperson is a Professor of Psychiatry and Obstetrics and Gynecology at the University of Pennsylvania. The Epperson laboratory at UPenn focuses on the neuroendocrinology of affective and cognitive disorders in women and also studies sex differences in neuropsychiatric, cognitive, and substance use disorders. Dr. Epperson’s clinical expertise is in the treatment of premenstrual dysphoric disorder, premenstrual worsening of depression and bipolar disorder, perinatal mental health issues, mood disorders due to hormonal treatments, and perimenopausal mood disturbances.

As the founder and director of the Penn Center for Women’s Behavioral Wellness, Dr. Epperson is dedicated to improving women’s health through greater understanding of the impact of hormones and sex differences on common conditions such as depression, anxiety, and somatic complaints. She is also Director of the Penn Building Interdisciplinary Research Careers in Women’s Health and Penn PROMOTES Research on Sex and Gender in Health.

C. Neill Epperson, MD will deliver this year’s keynote presentation.

Need To Know

WHEN
Thursday, October 19, 2017
11:30 a.m. - 1:30 p.m.

WHERE
Denver Center for the Performing Arts
Seawell Ballroom

REGISTER
Online at CWHR.org
15th Annual Women’s Health Symposium

Over 120 healthcare professionals attended the CWHR’s 15th Annual Women’s Health Symposium on February 25

Drs. Jane Reusch, Sarah Perman, Joe Kay, Lynn Barbour, Sarah Mayson, and Amy Huebschmann of the CU School of Medicine presented on a range of practical topics including new medications for diabetes, gender differences in post-cardiac arrest care, adult congenital heart disease, prevention of adverse metabolic outcomes related to gestational diabetes, thyroid disease in women, and hypertension treatment targets. Healthcare professionals received continuing medical education credits for participating in the half-day symposium.

Please mark your calendar for next year’s symposium planned for Saturday, March 3, 2018.

Did You Know?

- Offspring health starts in utero. Maternal obesity and gestational diabetes may program offspring to be at greater risk for childhood obesity.
- Women may have different cardiac arrest characteristics than men. Women also continue to receive less aggressive therapies than men.
- Thyroid functional and structural disorders disproportionately affect women. Both hyper-thyroidism and hypothyroidism are associated with adverse cardiovascular outcomes.
Accolades

Jane Reusch, MD (left) and Judy Regensteiner, PhD (right) are very pleased that their VA Merit grant, “Cardiovascular Mechanisms of Exercise Intolerance in Diabetes and the Role of Sex” has been funded! This 4-year grant will evaluate why exercise is impaired in people with type-2 diabetes as well as the sex differences in the responses. Exercise is one of the most salient factors in preserving health and longevity; therefore, identifying why type-2 diabetes impairs exercise capacity (and why the impairment seems to be worse in women than in men) has wide-reaching implications for public health.

Three CWHR researchers—Lori Walker, PhD (left); Christine Tompkins, MD (center); and Dave Kao, MD (right)—received a Colorado Pilot Team Science Award from the Colorado Clinical & Translational Sciences Institute. This 1-year award encourages cross-disciplinary and collaborative research in clinical and translational science. Their project, entitled “Cardiovascular Risks of Marijuana,” seeks to provide evidence-based information on how marijuana affects the heart.
Accolades

Wendy Kohrt, PhD was named Chair of the National Steering Committee for a major National Institutes of Health initiative aimed at improving our understanding of molecular changes during physical activity. The program is called Molecular Transducers of Physical Activity in Humans (MoTrPAC).

Dave Kao, MD received a National Institutes of Health Career Development (K Series) Award for his grant entitled “Development of a Closed-Loop Integrated Framework for Discovery of Novel Treatment Strategies in Heart Failure (CLIFFNOTES-HF).” The objective of the K Series Career Development Program, which includes a training component and a research plan, is to prepare candidates for an independent research career and to help them become competitive for major grant support.

Liz Wellberg, PhD received a Komen Career Catalyst research grant. This 3-year grant includes a training component and a research plan. Dr. Wellberg’s proposed study focuses on the relationship between breast cancer and metabolism.

Kristen Demoruelle, MD received an interdisciplinary research grant from the CU Department of Medicine. Dr. Demoruelle, who works in the Division of Rheumatology, will collaborate with a researcher from the Division of Hematology to study the earliest steps in the development of rheumatoid arthritis.
Let’s Talk: Digestive Health

On March 14, the “Let’s Talk: Conversations about Women’s Health” series continued with a discussion on digestive health.

The talk featured five physicians from the division of Gastroenterology and Hepatology who covered a variety of topics, including the relationship between carbs, gluten, and the gut; irritable bowel syndrome and non-pharmacologic therapy; constipation and accidental bowel leakage; colorectal cancer prevention; and endoscopic therapies for weight loss. Over one hundred fifty attendees learned about the importance of digestive health and cancer screenings.

Left to right: Panelists Shelby Sullivan, MD; Swati Patel, MD, MS; Alison Freeman, MD; Jenny Czwornog, MD; Gregory Austin, MD, MPH

Below: the human digestive tract

In recent years, the prevalence of celiac disease in the U.S. has been stable (less than 1%); however, the use of gluten-free diets has increased quickly.
Let’s Talk: Personalized Medicine

This installment of the “Let’s Talk: Conversations about Women’s Health” series, held on April 19, focused on personalized medicine

In April 2014, the Center for Personalized Medicine was formed as a collaboration between UCHealth, The University of Colorado School of Medicine, Department of Medicine, Children’s Hospital Colorado, and CU Medicine. The Center aims to use patients’ genetic information to fundamentally advance care by providing enhanced ability to predict, prevent, and treat disease. This “Let’s Talk” brought together the Director of the Center for Personalized Medicine, Kathleen Barnes, PhD, and four other presenters to discuss the possibilities and challenges associated with personalized medicine.

Personalized (Precision) Medicine is a young but rapidly advancing field that is informed by each person's unique clinical, genetic, genomic, and environmental information.

Pharmacogenomics is a subset of personalized medicine that focuses on using genetic information to understand why drug responses differ between individuals.

Kathleen Barnes, PhD joined the Department of Medicine in late 2015 as the head of the bioinformatics and personalized medicine division, and the director of the CU Center for Personalized Medicine. Dr. Barnes spent the previous 23 years at Johns Hopkins, where her lab studied the genetics of complex diseases.
New Scientific Council Members

*The CWHR welcomes C. Noel Bairey Merz, MD and Jill M. Goldstein, PhD to the Scientific Council*

Dr. Bairey Merz holds the Women's Guild Endowed Chair in Women's Health, and is Director of the Barbra Streisand Women's Heart Center, the Linda Joy Pollin Women's Heart Health Program, and the Preventive Cardiac Center at the Cedars-Sinai Heart Institute. She also is Professor of Medicine at Cedars-Sinai Medical Center. Dr. Bairey Merz’s research interests are focused on women and cardiovascular disease, mental stress and heart disease, the role of exercise and stress management in reversing disease, the role of cholesterol and nutrition management in heart disease, and adverse pregnancy outcomes and cardiovascular disease.

Dr. Goldstein is a Professor of Psychiatry and Medicine at Harvard Medical School and Director of Research at the Connors Center for Women’s Health and Gender Biology at Brigham and Women’s Hospital (BWH). As a clinical neuroscientist, Dr. Goldstein is an internationally recognized expert in understanding sex differences in health and diseases associated with the central nervous system. Dr. Goldstein’s investigations have focused on characterizing sex differences in the development and adult functioning of the human brain and how these differences contribute to understanding sex differences in psychiatric and neurologic disorders and their comorbidity with general medical disorders.
CWHR in the Community

This quarter, the CWHR engaged in many exciting community programs

- Wendy Kohrt, PhD spoke to over 100 employees at Arrow Electronics in March. Her talk, “Estrogen Therapy after Menopause: Kiss of Death or Fountain of Youth,” focused on the importance of estrogen and how the natural decline in estrogen as we age affects cardiovascular and metabolic health.

- Amy Huebschmann, MD provided free health screenings at the Center for African American Health’s annual health fair on March 11. CWHR staff also distributed useful health information to over 250 attendees at the fair.

- Judy Regensteiner, PhD and Jane Reusch, MD gave talks about women’s heart health and diabetes, respectively, at Catholic Health Initiatives.

- Bridget Young, PhD talked to 20 pregnant women about the benefits of breastfeeding at a “Wellness while Expecting” event in February.

Participants at the Center for African American Health’s annual health fair this March.

The fair offers free health screenings for vision, hearing, glucose, blood pressure, breast cancer, prostate cancer, bone density, and more. The event attracts over 1,000 participants, both individuals and families.
Meet Our Researchers

Amy Huebschmann, MD

Amy Huebschmann joined the CWHR research faculty in 2006. She holds a BS in Environmental Engineering from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, and an MD from the Vanderbilt University School of Medicine. When she’s not working with the CWHR, doing research, or seeing patients, Amy spends her time hiking with her husband, coaching middle school recreational league volleyball for her oldest daughter, and running 5Ks with her youngest daughter.

When you were young, did you envision yourself growing up to become a doctor?

I recently rediscovered an old book from my childhood, Dr. Seuss’ All About Me, in which I scribbled from ages 5 to 9. One page asks, “What do you want to be when you grow up?” I first wrote “doctor,” and then crossed that out and wrote “scientist.” I guess I had a lot of self-awareness in elementary school, as I’m currently pursuing a career as a physician-scientist!

How has your work positively impacted others?

My current research helps patients with type-2 diabetes become more physically active. One patient told me that the increase in exercise has helped him feel powerful in his life again—“like a champion,” in his words. Another patient told me I should get a Nobel Prize for doing this kind of work. So I think it’s helping people feel good about themselves and their lives.

If you had to go back and give your younger self one piece of advice relating to your future career, what would it be?

I would have told myself to more quickly seek out mentors in the fields that interested me. Some jobs sound great on paper, but when you actually observe the day-to-day work, you realize they’re not a good fit for you. Before starting my career as a physician-scientist, I was interested in environmental engineering. After a summer internship in the engineering field, I realized I wanted more interpersonal interaction and communication than engineering could offer. That ultimately pushed me to consider going to medical school.
Marge Bunkers was a University of Colorado employee for 12 years and has been a loyal supporter of the CWHR since 2010. After she lost her daughter Joyce (pictured below) to ischemia from a cardiac event in 2009, she decided to seek out ways of supporting cardiovascular research in women. She was impressed by the CWHR, she says, because “it asks the questions nobody else is asking.”

**How did you get involved with the CWHR?**

After Joyce passed away, I was looking for a way to honor her memory. I came across a newspaper article about Judy [Regensteiner] and the CWHR. So I called Judy and asked to come talk with her. We had a wonderful discussion about the Center and its goals. I thought there was no better way to honor Joyce's memory than to start supporting the Center. The work you do is incredibly important.

**What drew you to the CWHR's work, specifically?**

Nobody asked Joyce the right questions when she went to the doctor for regular checkups. Because of that, they missed something that they otherwise might have found. The CWHR asks the right questions—the questions nobody else is asking. That's very important to me. I don't think it helps anybody to say, 'Okay, we found the answer. We're done now.' You have to continue to ask questions. When you start assuming you know everything, you set yourself up to be blindsided.

**What do you hope for the future of the Center?**

I really hope you keep doing the important work you're doing. I hope you never stop asking questions and seeking better answers. It's hard work, but so many people will benefit from the effort.
The CWHR received gifts from the following donors between July 1, 2016 and March 30, 2017. We are incredibly grateful for your generous support.

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Center for Women’s Health Research
2017 Annual Community Luncheon
Thursday, October 19, 2017
11:30am - 1:30pm
Denver Center for the Performing Arts, Seawell Ballroom

What do Sex Differences have to do with It?
Understanding Hormones and Health across the Lifespan

Keynote Speaker
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