



Quarterly Highlights

SPRING 2020 QUARTERLY HIGHLIGHTS



Hello and Best Wishes from Dr. Judy Regensteiner, CWHR Director and Co-founder

In the past several months, we have all worked to adjust to the situation surrounding COVID-19. Our communities, research programs and clinical activities have changed in profound ways. We are all currently working from home, although the campus is now starting to gradually open up. During these unprecedented times, we remain as committed as ever to the health of our faculty, staff and community.

Women's health research and sex differences research need our hard work and that of our researchers more than ever! Our researchers have been outstanding in adjusting to the situation and are committed to starting up their research as soon as they are allowed to do so. Scientists are busy writing manuscripts and grants so that they keep moving forward. While we are all looking forward to when research can fully continue in the lab, we are depending on each other to get through this difficult time. In the meantime, the Center and our researchers continue to lead women's health and sex/gender differences research to improve the health and lives of everyone.

May 10 through 16 was National Women's Health Week and the month of May was National Mental Health Month. It is a fitting time to check in with our community by focusing on physical and mental health. In 2019, we added a third focus to the Center: the intersection of physical and mental health. This area is in addition to our existing focus areas of cardiovascular disease and diabetes. In this newsletter, we welcome C. Neill Epperson, MD, chair of the CU Department of Psychiatry, as a wonderful addition to the Senior Faculty of the Center. We are also featuring Elissa Kolva, PhD, Assistant Professor of Medical Oncology. Dr. Kolva launched a psycho-oncology research program with a 2019 Center seed grant to help young women with breast cancer facing fertility issues.

We are looking forward to several events in the coming months. Our Let's Talk: Conversations about Women's Health lecture series has been moved to an online format temporarily so we can continue to bring relevant and impactful health information to our audience. Girl's Career Day was postponed until January, and we are excited for the time when we can invite these talented young people to campus and possibly inspire them to pursue a career in science.

We will be having a fundraising event in the fall as is our custom and will be reconfiguring our Annual Community Luncheon for this year. We are currently working on the format and date and will announce those details in the coming weeks. While we are adjusting to the current situation, we are certain that we will once again offer an unforgettable experience and thus educate our community on the importance of health with regards to women and sex/gender differences. The Annual Community Luncheon is one of our favorite events - it gives us the opportunity to connect with our community and provide evidence-based education for those who attend. We look forward to connecting with you all in celebration and support of women's health and sex differences research in the fall of 2020.

We hope that you all are staying healthy, and we look forward to a time when we can celebrate the Center's progress in person.

Judy Regensteiner, PhD
Director and Co-founder, Center for Women's Health Research
Judith and Joseph Wagner Chair in Women's Health Research

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Upcoming Events

- May 14** * Researcher Training, Grants Administration Basics: Requirements of the PI, Budgets and Expense Reconciliation, led by Tim Lockie, MBA, MS
- May 14** * Special Live Stream Let's Talk: Taking care of your whole self – body and mind – during this time of uncertainty
- June 17** Researcher Training, Career Resilience, led by Vikhyat Bebarta, MD
- July 29** Researcher Training, K to R Transition, led by Kerrie Moreau, PhD
- August 17** Let's Talk: It's All in Your Head: The Importance of Brain Health
- Postponed** National Conference on Women's Health and Sex Differences Research
- Postponed** Girls' Career Day

The University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus is postponing all in-person events through August 2020. The safety of our community is extremely important to us. The Let's Talk lecture series and researcher trainings are moving online so we can continue to engage with our community. We look forward to gathering in person once it is safe to do so.

* Resources and videos for past events can be found at www.cwhr.org

Planning Our Annual Community Luncheon

We are excited to announce that the Annual Community Luncheon will be going forward this fall. However, it will be in a modified format. Exactly what format and the final date will be announced in the coming weeks. Like many of you, we are adjusting to ensure the safety and health of our attendees, speakers, scientists and medical professionals. Our goal is that the Annual Community Luncheon will be filled with exciting news about the work of the Center. We want it to leave you energized about evidence-based science. While how we all gather will change, the mission and drive of the Center will not. We love the Annual Community Luncheon for so many reasons. We look forward to connecting with you all in celebration and support of women's health and sex differences research in the fall 2020.

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Researcher Spotlight

Elissa Kolva, PhD

Assistant Professor, Division of Medical Oncology
CWHR Junior Faculty Research Development Award Recipient



"One of the most exciting things I found at the Center is how everyone supports each other and connects. This teamwork and mentorship make everyone stronger."

Elissa Kolva, PhD, is combining her passion for patient care and research to build a robust psycho-oncology program at the CU Anschutz Medical Campus. This relatively new field helps patients in the CU Cancer Center cope with a serious diagnosis and promotes positive mental health. Dr. Kolva said, "In psycho-oncology, I talk to patients about subjects that are often avoided such as meaning, purpose, hope and hopelessness." When she first entered the field at Mount Sinai Hospital in New York, Dr. Kolva worked with patients in the Department of Urology. "Oftentimes, I was the first person that these men had ever talked to about the stresses surrounding a prostate cancer diagnosis," Dr. Kolva recalled.

Dr. Kolva has always let her clinical experiences guide research questions, and when she joined CU Anschutz in 2016, she found an underserved population. "I started to notice a lot of young female cancer patients struggling with issues specific to their age group," said Dr. Kolva. "They were concerned about changes in fertility and parenting while undergoing cancer treatment." In reviewing the literature, Dr. Kolva also found that women were less likely than men to receive fertility-related information and that there was limited research on psychological support interventions for this population. While the patients were receiving outstanding care for the physical issues related to their cancer, Dr. Kolva knew that she wanted to expand their options for mental health services and create new or adapt current psychotherapies to address these issues.

In collaboration with her colleagues and mentors, she applied for pilot funding from the CWHR to launch a psycho-oncology research program. She was awarded

a CWHR seed grant through peer review that allows her to do research on the relationship between reproductive concerns, psychological distress and sense of meaning and purpose in young women with breast cancer. The CWHR seed grant, which combines funding with mentorship and training, has proven to be a powerful tool to help launch successful research careers for junior faculty.

Mentorship has been an important aspect of Dr. Kolva's career. "My early mentors showed me that you can be a productive and accomplished scientist and just a really good person as well," said Dr. Kolva. "One of the most exciting things I found at the Center is how everyone supports each other and connects. This teamwork and mentorship make everyone stronger."

In Dr. Kolva's clinical program, she observed that pregnancy and fertility issues are often intertwined with a cancer diagnosis. "I once asked a patient when her cancer story began, and she said, 'when I first took a pregnancy test,'" said Dr. Kolva. For some patients, pregnancy and time with their children are coupled with a serious medical diagnosis. The mental health of patients is extremely important as they navigate this time, and Dr. Kolva is developing and testing meaning-centered therapies to help this population.

"In the clinic, I noticed an unmet need for many patients. While they received excellent care for their cancer, they still needed mental health support. In our efforts to provide whole person care we need to do more. By combining clinical care and research, we are changing this and offering new options to patients."



Faculty Spotlight

C. Neill Epperson, MD

**Chair, CU Department of Psychiatry
Robert Freedman Endowed Professor
Senior Faculty, Center for Women's Health Research**

"My career mission as a physician-scientist and academic leader is to promote the centrality of the brain with respect to all areas of health. This is particularly important for women."

Please welcome C. Neill Epperson, MD, as she joins the Center as senior faculty. With her career in psychiatry, she is helping us expand our new focus area on the intersection of physical and mental health.

"From puberty to menopause, women's hormones are naturally fluctuating, and the brain must adapt rapidly to the hormonal changes in order for the individual to function optimally. Healthcare providers working with female patients frequently manipulate endogenous hormone levels by prescribing steroid contraceptives, infertility treatments, chemotherapies or through surgical procedures such as oophorectomy (removal of the ovaries). It is critical that these healthcare providers understand the potential impact of their medical or surgical procedure on the female brain," said Dr. Epperson.

Dr. Epperson's interest in behavior started in fifth grade when she asked her father why some of her classmates were mean and hurtful, while others were kind and easy going. She was naturally curious

about behavior and psychology, but it wasn't until her residency that she became interested specifically in the brain. Dr. Epperson's experience during residency led her to focus on understanding the underlying biology of behavior in both her research and clinical operations.

"I had a patient who was presented to me as having postpartum depression, but I quickly found that her situation was much more complex. She was experiencing thoughts of harming her children and was avoiding them as much as possible as their presence triggered these unwanted, terrifying thoughts. Avoiding one's child is clearly not in the child or the mother's best interest," said Dr. Epperson. "Given healthy mother-child attachment is critical to the child's survival and normal development, I became interested in what could be going on biologically around the time of pregnancy and delivery to promote adaptive or maladaptive maternal behavior. This is when I became fascinated with the role of hormones in attachment behavior as well as mood and cognition."

In the course of Dr. Epperson's illustrious career, she and her colleagues have uncovered how hormonal changes across the lifespan impact the brain, psychophysiology, mood and cognition. She is internationally known for her work related to early life stress and its impact on risk for affective disorders and cognition under different hormonal conditions. When she first launched her research, she was one of the relatively few psychiatrists in the country whose work was dedicated specifically to women's health across the reproductive lifespan. Luckily, that has changed in recent years with significantly more researchers and resources dedicated to women's mental health. There is now a greater appreciation that hormones have a profound impact on brain function and that the troublesome mood or cognitive symptoms experienced by a substantial subgroup of women are "real" and in some cases quite serious. Thus, medical and surgical procedures that impact endogenous gonadal steroid levels and dynamics must be considered as potential triggers for depression, anxiety, psychosis, insomnia, sexual dysfunction and cognitive impairments. Likewise, clinicians who manage psychiatric conditions should take into consideration the potential contribution of both endogenous and exogenous gonadal steroids, as well as childhood adversity in their treatment planning.

Dr. Epperson was recruited to the CU Anschutz Medical Campus to serve as chair of the Department of Psychiatry. She was the previous founder and director of the Penn Center for Women's Behavioral Wellness and Penn PROMOTES, Research on Sex and Gender in Health at the Perelman School of Medicine at the University of Pennsylvania. "It was clear that CU Anschutz sees the importance of studying women's health and sex differences and understands how important the brain is to all areas of health. The faculty and leadership are all aligned with a single vision that mental health is important," said Dr. Epperson.

Given Dr. Epperson's focus on women's mental health and the CWHR's expansion of its focus areas to include the intersection of physical and mental health, a natural partnership with Dr. Judy Regensteiner, Director of the CWHR, was created. "The Center is remarkable, one of the most productive Centers of its kind in the entire country," said Dr. Epperson. "I hope to ensure that sex and gender research, as it intersects with psychiatric and translational neuroscience research, is at the forefront of the healthcare field." Given her leading career in women's mental health and her close collaboration with Dr. Regensteiner, having Dr. Epperson join the senior faculty at the Center will benefit the lives of women for generations.

DID YOU KNOW?

Women are twice as likely as men to suffer from depression. Due to the link between mental health and physical health, depression raises the risk for diabetes, and people with diabetes are more likely to become depressed, due in part to the complexities of managing this chronic disease. This is just one of many examples at the intersection of physical and mental health.

This is the newest focus area for the Center. Faculty like Dr. Epperson are leading the way in finding new therapies and uncovering more links between physical and mental health. This research will better inform diagnoses and treatment approaches.

18th Annual Women's Health Symposium

FEBRUARY 29, 2020

Our Annual Women's Health Symposium is our longest running educational program intended for healthcare providers in the community. The goal of this event is to educate medical professionals on the latest evidence-based information on women's health and sex differences so they can better care for their patients. Attendees heard from experts at the University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus regarding treating patients with diabetes and cardiovascular disease; when to use and when to stop the use of statins; sleep and mood in menopausal women; personalized medicine and the implications for women's health; and cardiovascular disease in transgender adults. Most of the attendees said they would incorporate evidence-based research they learned at the symposium into their practices.

Highlights from Speakers

- Reduce the risk of cardiovascular disease by preventing or delaying the onset of diabetes.
- Manage blood cholesterol
 - o Heart healthy diet
 - o Regular exercise
 - o Avoid tobacco
 - o Maintain a healthy weight
- Statin medications are members of the HMG-CoA reductase inhibitor class of cholesterol-lowering medication.
- Deprescribing statin medications is often proposed in a setting of life limiting illness when the initial expected benefit is diminished by a change in quality or quantity of life.
- Having a "transgender inclusive" provider led to significantly better outcomes for patients.
- Precision or personalized medicine refers to the approach to disease treatment and prevention that takes into account individual variability in genes, environment and lifestyle for each person.
- Pharmacogenomics is a component of precision medicine that uses genetic information to guide drug selection and dosing to maximize efficacy and minimize adverse effects.

"I intend to serve as an advocate with regards to health literacy and how patients understand the importance of understanding the relationship between cardiovascular disease and diabetes."



We thank the excellent speakers and educators who participated in the 18th Annual Women's Health Symposium.

Christina Aquilante, PharmD, FCCP

Mark Cornier, MD

Sean Iwamoto, MD

Helen Coons, PhD, ABPP

Amy Huebschmann, MD

Jane Reusch, MD

Let's Talk Series

Cardiovascular News You Can Use

FEBRUARY 25, 2020

To mark heart health month, the February Let's Talk featured *Guarding Your Heart: Cardiovascular News You Can Use*. The resounding message of the event was to advocate for your own health. Peter Buttrick, MD, Judy Regensteiner, PhD, and Robert Page, PharmD, discussed the signs and symptoms of heart disease

in women, how to take action to prevent heart disease, and the sex-specific differences in the treatment of cardiovascular disease through medication. Each expert emphasized the importance of educating yourself about your heart health and risk factors. Being empowered to speak openly with healthcare providers about your concerns will benefit your overall health.



DID YOU KNOW?

- More women die of heart disease than the next seven causes of death combined.
- Women with coronary artery disease and heart failure are less likely than men:
 - to be referred to a hospital
 - to be managed by a cardiologist and are more likely to be treated by a general practitioner
 - to have coronary angiography, exercise testing and Holter monitoring
 - to be treated with ACE-inhibitors or antiplatelet drugs
- Women have a higher prevalence of avoidable risk factors for heart disease than men including:
 - higher cholesterol
 - higher rates of physical inactivity
 - higher BMI
- Adults should engage in at least 150 minutes per week of accumulated moderate-intensity physical activity or 75 minutes each week of vigorous-intensity physical activity to lessen heart disease risk. Children should engage in at least 60 minutes per day of physical activity.
- Women are under-represented in clinical trials and comprise only 1/3 of study participants for cardiovascular trials.
- Differences exist in the pharmacokinetics of medications between men and women, which result in differences in drug response, adverse effects and outcomes with certain medications.

Visit www.cwhr.org

for videos of Let's Talk lectures and links to resources to continue your learning.



Researcher Trainings



Jenny Kemp, PhD

Leads Training for CWHR Researchers on Revising Grant Submissions

FEBRUARY 25, 2020

CWHR scientists gathered for this month's researcher training led by Jenny Kemp, PhD, grant writer and director of the Department of Medicine Research Office.

Dr. Kemp provided invaluable insight into when and how researchers should revise and resubmit grant applications when they have received a lower score than expected. She gave specific pointers and examples about how best to respond positively to all reviewer criticism.



Alex Yannacone, MA

Hosts Training on Self Care

APRIL 29, 2020

On April 29, the Center hosted a researcher training featuring Alex Yannacone from the Johnson Depression Center. This online lecture taught participants to assess their wellness activities as well as provided strategies for managing stress.

Key Takeaways

- There are six key components to ensuring personal well-being including: physical, psychological, emotional, spiritual, relationship, workplace.
- Self-care is essential in managing stress and staying healthy.
- Some common self-care activities include daily walks outside, healthy eating habits, meditation and more.

COMMUNITY TALKS

Kristen Demoruelle, MD, PhD

Speaks to Arrow Electronics About Sex Differences in Autoimmune Diseases

FEBRUARY 12, 2020



CWHR scientist Kristen Demoruelle, MD, PhD, spoke to employees at Arrow Electronics about different types of autoimmune diseases (localized and systemic) and the associated sex differences. Dr. Demoruelle is a rheumatologist who studies rheumatoid arthritis (RA), which is a systemic inflammatory disease that primarily affects joints and can lead to decreased quality of life. Her research focuses on what causes RA-related antibodies to initially develop. She hopes to identify specific factors or mechanisms that may explain why RA affects women three times more often than men.

DID YOU KNOW?

- Autoimmune diseases are those in which the body's immune system attacks the body. In RA, the immune system attacks the joints.
- Some autoimmune diseases are localized (e.g. type I diabetes, multiple sclerosis, Grave's disease).
- Systemic autoimmune diseases commonly affect many different organs (e.g. RA, Lupus, Sjogren's syndrome, Ankylosing spondylitis).
- The risk of cardiovascular disease is 2-3 times higher in those who have RA.
- Studying sex differences in a disease that mainly effects one sex, like RA, could lead to benefits for both males and females with auto-immune diseases.



Jane Reusch, MD

Speaks to Arrow Electronics About Diabetes

FEBRUARY 27, 2020

Jane Reusch, MD, CWHR Associate Director, Professor of Medicine, Bioengineering and Biochemistry and American Diabetes Association 2018 President for Medicine and Science, presented *Diabetes: A Deadly and Preventable Epidemic*. This talk focused on the risk factors associated with diabetes and how to prevent developing this disease.

DID YOU KNOW?

There are many factors to determine your risk for diabetes:

- Over 45 years old
- Person of color
- Family history of diabetes
- BMI greater than 25
- Sedentary lifestyle
- High blood pressure

Over 34 million people, or 10.5% of the population, in the U.S. have diabetes.

HERE ARE THREE THINGS YOU CAN DO EVERY DAY TO PREVENT DIABETES:

- 1) Exercise regularly
- 2) Eat a balanced, healthy diet
- 3) Manage your weight



Researcher Management and Leadership Training Course Launches Worldwide

On April 14, CWHR Senior Faculty member Dr. Anne Libby launched *Researcher Management and Leadership Training* on Coursera, the world's largest online learning platform. Development of this course was made possible through a grant from the Doris Duke Foundation to Drs. Anne Libby and Judith Regensteiner. This free online course is designed to help early career researchers and mentors navigate the complexities of managing a research program. This course will be useful for our junior researchers and senior faculty and is now available to researchers around the world.

“We use mentoring and training to boost people’s skills, one by one.”

“During individual conversations with mentees, I noticed a large gap in education around managing grants and large research operations,” said Anne Libby, PhD, CWHR Senior Faculty and Principal Investigator in development of the course. “They knew the science really well, but medical schools weren’t preparing junior faculty to manage grants and laboratory staff. This course aims to start the conversation and train people around the world.”

Dr. Libby joined the Senior Faculty at the Center in 2017 and has played a major role in mentoring and training Center researchers as well as providing outstanding training to faculty at the CU Anschutz Medical Campus. Dr. Libby said, “The Center and I have always been passionate about teaching clinicians how to do research and build research careers. We train them to become good leaders, which is essential in academic medicine.” Mentoring is important to her work, and a principal function of the Center. The CWHR sees this training as a necessary course to take research to the next level. Dr. Libby noted, “We use mentoring and training to boost people’s skills, one by one. These skills range from basic study design and analysis to grant writing, managing funding and more.”

“To bring a fundamental piece of the Center’s training mission to researchers and mentors worldwide is very exciting,” said Dr. Judy Regensteiner, Director of the Center for Women’s Health Research.

This resource is available on Coursera. More information and a link to the course may be found at www.cwhr.org

COVID Highlights the Need for Sex Differences Research

“This COVID-19 public health crisis demonstrates the need for additional research in all areas of health and specifically sex and gender differences. By better understanding sex differences broadly, we can better care for patients of all genders.”

Judy Regensteiner, PhD, Director and Co-founder of the Center for Women's Health Research

As we continue to watch the COVID-19 situation unfold around the world, it presents scientists with interesting questions about how we understand the virus and possible differences between men and women. At the Center, we are dedicated to expanding the body of knowledge in women's health and sex differences research. Today, our mission is more important than ever given the many questions about sex differences and women's health research. As we have seen in available data, men and women appear to be at equal risk of contracting COVID. However, men are reported to be at a higher risk of having severe complications and death from COVID-19 than women.

This difference in severity may be caused by social determinants, genetics or other causes that are still being researched. Understanding possible sex differences in COVID-19 is important for public health experts as they set policies in the coming months and years.

On April 3, the *New York Times* reported that the United States wasn't keeping track of the sex breakdown of the numbers. In order for us to fully understand COVID-19, we must look at the data disaggregated by sex. A recent report in the *Lancet* revealed that no gender analysis of the outbreak had been conducted by health experts in any of the affected countries.

The *Wall Street Journal* noted that there are many sex differences in the immune system, and researchers are working to figure out how that relates to COVID-19. In addition to possible sex-based differences (biological differences), there may be gender differences



(psychosocial differences). The *Lancet* also reported that the closure of schools may have limited work and economic activities for women disproportionately compared to men, limiting the exposure of the virus to women.

There is still much to learn about sex and gender differences with regard to COVID-19, but we do know that researching sex differences and women's health in the coming years will be more important as we work to uncover sex and biological differences to better treat diseases.

RESOURCES:

<https://www.vox.com/2020/4/9/21215063/coronavirus-covid-19-deaths-men-women-sex-dying-why>

<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/04/03/us/coronavirus-male-female-data-bias.html>

[https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(20\)30526-2/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(20)30526-2/fulltext)

Researcher Accolades



Chelsea Magin, PhD



Teri Hernandez, PhD, RN



*Melanie Cree Green,
MD, PhD*

Chelsea Magin, PhD

Filed a patent for “Hybrid-hydrogels comprising decellularized extracellular matrix” with a team of collaborators. Dr. Magin was awarded a grant to develop dynamically tunable biomaterial platforms to explore oxidative stresses in pulmonary fibrosis.

Teri Hernandez, PhD, RN

Co-principal investigator on two newly funded grants along with Lynn Barbour, MD. One is titled “The Early and Late Contribution of Fasting and Postprandial Triglycerides on Newborn Subcutaneous and Intrahepatic Fat in Obese Pregnancies” and funded by the American Diabetes Association. The second grant, “Pilot RCT Intervention Targeting Fasting and Postprandial TG with a Point-of-Care Meter and Omega-3 Fatty Acids in Obese Pregnancies,” is funded by Harold Hamm Diabetes Center and Presbyterian Health Foundation.

Melanie Cree Green, MD, PhD

Received a Doris Duke Foundation Clinical Scientist Development Award Collaboration Supplement Grant titled “Determining resting metabolic energy requirements in a diverse sample of adolescents with a range of BMI from normal weight to extreme obesity.” This grant allows her to collect measurements of resting metabolic requirements and build a database to merge this data and include demographic, body composition and metabolic measures. This data will help determine a new thematical equation for resting energy expenditure that is in line with the metabolic state of today’s youth.



Sean Iwamoto, MD



Petter Bjornstad, MD



Anne Lynch, MD



Christine Swanson, MD

Sean Iwamoto, MD

Was awarded the World Professional Association for Transgender Health (WPATH) Pilot Research Project Grant to determine whether estrogen plus spironolactone increases levels of D-dimer, von Willebrand Factor and Factor VIII during the first six months of feminizing gender-affirming hormone therapy.



Petter Bjornstad, MD

Received the American Society of Clinical Investigation (ASCI) Young Physician-Scientist Award. The ASCI Council Young Physician-Scientist Awards recognize physician-scientists who are early in their first faculty appointment and have made notable achievements in their research.

Anne Lynch, MD

Received a grant from the Center for Children’s Surgery, Children’s Hospital Colorado to research retinopathy of prematurity, a leading cause of blindness in children and important public health issue.



Christine Swanson, MD

Received a NIH Research grant from the National Institute of Arthritis and Musculoskeletal and Skin Diseases to support her work to better understand how sleep restriction and circadian disruption may suppress a marker of bone formation but not resorption, an imbalance that could lead to bone loss, osteoporosis and increased fracture risk.



Donor Spotlight

Toni Cohig

Board Chair Emerita

“There are so many pressing needs in the world and one can only do so much. You have to choose those opportunities in which you feel your investment can really make a difference. I chose the Center not only because of the mission, but because of the quality of leadership and the standards set for accomplishing that mission.”

In 2002, the idea of the Center for Women’s Health Research was just taking shape. The three faculty founders, Drs. Judith Regensteiner, JoAnn Lindenfeld and Lorna Moore, recognized the need to start a center as well as the critical importance of involving the community from the very beginning. Judith Wagner, who later became the founding Advisory Board Chair, invited community leaders, including Toni Cohig, to an informational lunch at the Tattered Cover. From this, a group of inspiring women came up with ways to support the founders, garner recognition, and expand community outreach for the Center. “At the time, I was just contributing ideas. We didn’t have a formal board, it was just a standing committee with a loose idea of how things would work,” said Toni. Those ideas led to the establishment of important goals that are foundational to the Center today: becoming a nationally recognized leader in women’s health research, providing seed grants for young researchers, hosting an international conference, and establishing an independent office location. Toni volunteered because she strongly believed in the mission and the potential of the entrepreneurial, grassroots effort being proposed. **“I thought this was the perfect opportunity to empower women to have a healthier life for themselves and their families,”** said Toni.

Toni accomplished a lot with the Center. She collaborated with the Junior League of Denver and together they brought health programming to members, led lobbying efforts at the capital, and provided financial support for operations of

the Center. She was integral in garnering financial support from numerous foundations throughout Colorado and raising the profile of the Center. Toni led the creation of the Visionary Investor Program with the purpose of matching a meaningful gift from the Leaffer family. With this outstanding level of philanthropy, the Center could recruit and retain faculty with innovative research programs and lead the country in women’s health research. This also led to the creation of the Center’s first endowed chair– the Judith and Joseph Wagner Endowed Chair in Women’s Health Research. By creating the first endowed chair in women’s health and sex differences research at the University of Colorado, the stage was set for two additional endowed chairs. **“The creation of these chairs allowed us to ensure the future of the Center and to elevate it nationally and internationally. It all leads to the attraction of more scientists, more production of research, better outcomes for women and their families,”** said Toni.

Additionally, Toni served as the Center’s second Advisory Board Chair, beginning her term in 2007. Around that time, she recognized the need to attract community supporters and helped recruit a group of younger women to serve on the luncheon committee. Like Toni, they made major contributions as Advisory Board members and remain committed to the Center today. Toni shared, “At the beginning, volunteers did everything; but with the development of philanthropic support, we were able to provide professional administrative staff to run the Center and start the research programs. We were very excited to fund our

first researcher. Now I see so much exponential growth with regards to junior faculty, and I attribute that to the success of mentorship and training.”

Toni brings a wealth of professional and philanthropic experience to the Center. Following graduation from the University of Illinois, she was a securities analyst in Chicago. After moving to Denver, she joined the Xerox sales organization. “Working at Xerox was inspiring because the company believed in hiring and promoting women. Standards were high, but there were opportunities available to everyone.” After she left Xerox, Toni dedicated her time to supporting local

nonprofits. Her love of the cultural arts in addition to her dedication to women and families resulted in commitments to SafeHouse Denver, Children’s Hospital Colorado, Colorado Symphony, Denver Art Museum, and many others.

“There are so many pressing needs in the world and one can only do so much. You have to choose those opportunities in which you feel your investment can really make a difference. I chose the Center not only because of the mission, but because of the quality of leadership and the standards set for accomplishing that mission.”



Giving Back

There are many ways to get involved with research — from participating in studies to giving back. By making a gift today, you ensure this critical work can continue.

Healthy women. Healthy world.

Follow us on social media and visit www.cwhr.org to learn about the latest women’s health news and hear about developments and educational opportunities at the Center.

@CWHR_CUAnschutz

www.facebook.com/CenterForWomensHealthResearch

Thank you to our outstanding supporters. Our philanthropic community ensures our success and allows critical research to continue. We are excited to note this incredible generosity in a donor roll section in the summer and winter newsletters.



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Let's Talk:

Conversations about Women's Health



Let's Talk: Conversations about Women's Health is a lecture series that educates the community on topics of health. These evidence-based talks provide information that people need to make educated decisions about health for themselves and their families. Let's Talk content is uniquely created and presented by a panel of nationally renowned subject matter experts, physicians, and researchers.

TO FIND OUT ABOUT OUR UPCOMING LET'S TALK LECTURES:

Visit: www.cwhr.org

Call: 303-724-9179

Email: cwhr@cuanschutz.edu



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