



Center For Women's Health Research

Quarterly Highlights

WINTER 2020 QUARTERLY HIGHLIGHTS



Hello! *From Dr. Judy Regensteiner, CWHR Director and Co-founder*

I was recently honored with the Ruth L. Kirschstein Memorial Lectureship at the National Institutes of Health's Building Interdisciplinary Research Careers in Women's Health (BIRCWH) annual meeting in Bethesda, MD. My lecture, "Strategic Career Development: Charting the Course," focused on mentoring. My co-founders and I recognized early that to build a dedicated workforce to do the critical research into women's health and sex differences, we must insist on obtaining and providing world-class mentorship and training to our young scientists. I am thrilled to have been recognized with the Ruth L. Kirschstein Memorial Lectureship for our mentoring efforts at the CWHR.

Today, we have 72 affiliated researchers and welcome our 5th senior faculty member who will dedicate some of her time to mentoring the next generation of women and men who do women's health and sex differences research. Please join me in welcoming Laura Brown, MD, an Associate Professor within the Department of Pediatrics-Neonatology, as the newest member of CWHR senior faculty.

We are also thrilled to announce that Betsy Wagner has joined our Advisory Board. Involved with the CWHR for many years, Betsy is passionate about the CWHR mission and scientists' research. We are very honored that she has chosen to join our Board.

February, traditionally referred to as American Heart Month, reminds us to take care of our heart. Since our inception, a major focus of the CWHR has been cardiovascular disease. We also focus on diabetes and the intersection of mental and physical health; both conditions share causal factors with heart disease or can lead to heart problems. At the CWHR, we aim to bring evidence-based solutions that will lead to healthy, more hopeful futures – giving you news you can use about taking care of your heart health is one of many ways we plan to make an impact on women's health.

With that in mind, we welcome you to join us for Let's Talk: Guarding your Heart: Cardiovascular News You Can Use on February 25th. *Let's Talk: Conversations about Women's Health* is a lecture series that educates the public on topics of health. Additionally, our 18th annual Women's Health Symposium designed to meet the educational needs of practitioners is on February 29th. Learn more about Let's Talk, Women's Health Symposium and other health news by visiting our website www.cwhr.org. We look forward to bringing you more exciting events and news in 2020.

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

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Upcoming Events

February 25 **Researcher Training: NIH Resubmissions – Writing a Responsive Revised Proposal**

February 25 **Let's Talk: Conversations about Women's Health – Guarding your Heart: Cardiovascular News You Can Use***

February 27 **Arrow Electronics Lunch & Learn with Jane Reusch, MD**

February 29 **18th Annual Women's Health Symposium**

March 17 **Researcher Training: Optimal Ways to Work with a Mentor**

April 23 **Let's Talk: Conversations about Women's Health- Brain Health**

April 27-28 **Annual CWHR Scientific Council Research Summit**

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

Announcing New Board Member Betsy Wagner

A Colorado native, Betsy returned home in 2012 after a twelve year stint on the East Coast. There she graduated from Syracuse University with a BA in Consumer Studies and a minor in psychology; she trained with the USA National Field Hockey Team; coached field hockey at Dartmouth College; worked on political and philanthropic programs for Hunt Alternatives Fund in Cambridge, MA; and spent six years in the residential real estate sales and development industry in Boston, MA.



Betsy Wagner

Upon returning to Colorado, Betsy joined Wagner Equipment Co., the Caterpillar and AGCO tractor dealer for Colorado, New Mexico and West Texas; during her time at Wagner she worked in the machine technology sector and in the machine sales sector. In March 2019, Betsy resigned from Wagner Equipment Co. to pursue her passion for philanthropy and entrepreneurship. Currently, Betsy is the Chair of the board at the Children's Museum of Denver, Marsico Campus; is on the Future Leaders board for the National Sports Center for the Disabled; and is involved in the Women's Foundation of Colorado. Additionally, Betsy was a leader in the development of the Emerging Leaders Council for the Colorado Contractors Association where she was also the Chair of community service.

We are proud and honored to welcome Betsy Wagner to the CWHR Community Advisory Board.

Faculty Spotlight

Laura Brown, MD

“I love working with junior faculty and hope to build their confidence and provide guidance so that they can balance the demands of research, medicine, and family.”

Please join us in welcoming Laura Brown, MD., an Associate Professor within the Department of Pediatrics-Neonatology, as the newest member of the Center for Women’s Health Research (CWHR) senior faculty.

Early in Dr. Brown’s career a mentor once asked, “Do you want to follow other people’s discoveries or do you want to be on the forefront of discovery?” At that moment, she knew that she was committed to research. As a neonatologist (a pediatrician who provides medical care of newborn infants, especially those born ill or premature), Dr. Brown has cared for many babies who were born prematurely with low birth weight due to Intrauterine Growth Restriction (IUGR). IUGR is a problem that develops in pregnancy when the placenta does not function properly, passage of nutrients to the fetus is reduced, and the baby does not grow normally. With each stage of her training, her interests in research grew, particularly concerning the health of the mother and the developing fetus. This led Dr. Brown to focus her research on how fetal growth and metabolism in the womb can affect disease later in life.

In 2008 as an early career scientist, Dr. Brown first learned about the CWHR when she was awarded the highly competitive National Institutes of Health Building Interdisciplinary Careers in Women’s Health (BIRCWH) training grant. Dr. Regensteiner, Principal Investigator on the grant and co-founder of the CWHR, became one of her mentors. The BIRCWH grant allowed her to follow her passion in studying the long-term impact of IUGR and the babies’ increased risk for developing heart disease and diabetes later in life.

Dr. Brown continued her connection with the CWHR when she received a seed grant to expand her research to study the impact of IUGR on skeletal muscle growth and the role of hormones in the regulation of muscle development. Dr. Brown credits BIRCWH and CWHR funding as well as the career mentorship from CWHR as important factors that led to her being awarded a large National Institutes of Health grant (R01) and to her leading her own research lab today.

As Dr. Brown’s career progressed, she became increasingly involved with the CWHR. She has served on planning committees, peer review panels and co-chaired sessions on fetal origins of disease for the CWHR biennial National Conference. For the upcoming 2020 National Conference in September, she will also chair the community session at the conference.

Dr. Brown possesses a natural affinity to mentor the next generation of scientists. She shared, “I love working with junior faculty and hope to build their confidence and provide guidance so that they can balance the demands of research, medicine, and family.” Dr. Brown feels she has benefited from the CWHR and is eager to help CWHR junior faculty become independent investigators and grow the field of women’s health and sex/gender differences research.



“By bringing prominent scientists like Dr. Mazure and Dr. Guille to the Anschutz Medical Campus, we raise awareness for women’s health and sex differences research and provide priceless connections for our junior faculty researchers.” ~ JUDY REGENSTEINER, PHD, CWHR DIRECTOR

Women’s Health Research Day

CWHR and the University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus Celebrate the 11th Annual Women’s Health Research Day



Carolyn Mazure, PhD

In late 2019, the CWHR welcomed Carolyn Mazure, PhD, founder and director of Women’s Health Research at Yale and a pioneer in the field of women’s health research as the keynote speaker for the 11th annual Women’s Health Research Day. Dr. Mazure’s keynote talk, “Not just studies of mice and men: Transforming science, evolving opportunities,” outlined why studying sex/gender differences is important and what opportunities lie ahead in this field.

Key takeaways from her keynote lecture:

- There are sex/gender differences in prevalence, presentation & risk factors of certain diseases. For example, women have a 4X greater risk of osteoporosis than men; incidence is greater than heart attack, stroke, and breast cancer combined (Watts, 2018).
- The response to an intervention can vary by sex/gender. For example, women wake faster under anesthesia, have poorer postoperative functioning with pain, nausea, vomiting and headache as well as longer hospital stays (Buchanan et al, 2009, 2011).
- Prevention strategies often need to be sex/gender-specific. For example, women smoke for different reasons than men (McKee et al, 2005).

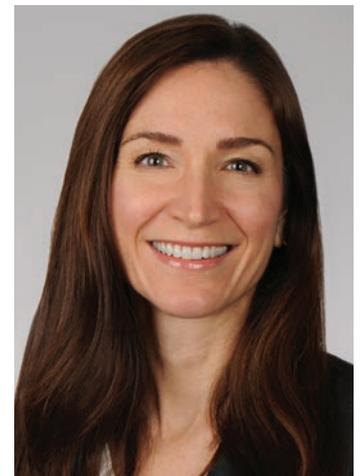
As part of Women’s Health Research Day, junior faculty researchers from departments across campus presented their recent findings in a judged poster show. Congratulations to the winners of the Women’s Health Research Day judged poster session. Visit www.cwhr.org to see a listing of the winners and the topic they presented.

Visiting Professor

Connie Guille, MD, is an Associate Professor in the Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences and the Director of the Women’s Reproductive Health Program at the Medical University of South Carolina (MUSC). Dr. Guille gave a keynote talk to CWHR researchers and campus faculty entitled, “Improving Treatment for Pregnant Women with Opioid Misuse and Opioid Use Disorders.” Dr. Guille’s work focuses on improving the mental health of pregnant and postpartum women.

Key takeaways from her keynote lecture:

- Pregnant women are among the most understudied populations in science; they are often the first to be excluded from studies.
- Opioid misuse during pregnancy often begins with a prescription to treat pain.
- It takes less time for women to become addicted to opioids than it does for men.
- The United States has experienced a 4-fold increase in opioid use disorder in pregnancy since 1999.



Connie Guille, MD



Chelsea Magin, PhD

Rx Medicine Cabinet

CWHR Medicine Cabinet Captivated by Innovative Work of Bioengineer Chelsea Magin, PhD

The CWHR Medicine Cabinet is a group of prominent community leaders who meet four times a year to hear from CWHR researchers and to discuss and provide advice on strategic initiatives. 2019 CWHR seed grant recipient, Chelsea Magin, PhD, spoke to the Medicine Cabinet about 3D printing advances in women's health. Her captivating talk centered around her lab's novel use of 3D printing techniques and specially formulated materials to create models of blood vessels that more closely mimic those found in the human body. Dr. Magin's lab is unique in its use of these techniques to study pulmonary hypertension, a rare but devastating disease that affects women more than men.

Researcher Trainings

Advancing careers in women's health and sex/gender differences research through academic & career development training

Thanks to generous supporters, the CWHR has been able to increase researcher training options. Over the last few months, we have hosted three training sessions led by Laura Brown, MD; Anne Libby, PhD; and John Rice, PhD.

CWHR researcher (and now senior faculty member) Laura Brown, MD, gave an informative training on **"Building Better Biosketches."** The biosketch is a detailed document specific to each grant proposal. It includes a personal statement, positions and honors, contributions to science, research support and a selection of pertinent publications. Dr. Brown gave important insights into what reviewers look for in a successful biosketch.



CWHR senior faculty member Anne Libby, PhD, provided an interactive training on **"Strategizing your Scholarship."** Demonstrating scholarship is very important to the advancement of science as well as promotion to full professor. Scholarship can be both traditional and non-traditional. Traditional scholarship is externally-funded grants and peer-reviewed publications. Non-traditional scholarship can be podcasts, webinars, patents or other means in which a scientist is creating/sharing knowledge.

Back by popular demand, CWHR biostatistician John Rice, PhD, presented to CWHR researchers in January as part of a **"Biostatistical Collaborations: Part 2-Analytic Methods"** training series. Biostatistical analysis is crucial for every step of scientific research, from the earliest stages of study design and grant proposals to disseminating findings to the scientific community and lay public.

Type 2 Diabetes Rates Differ in Females and Males Across the Life Course

By 2017 estimates, diabetes mellitus affects 425 million people globally and 90–95% of these have type 2 diabetes. Type 2 diabetes is characterized by a need for much higher insulin levels to control blood sugar levels than among healthy people — a phenomenon referred to as “insulin resistance.” Center for Women’s Health Research scientists recently published a review of scientific studies that assessed sex differences in the rates of type 2 diabetes across the lifespan (Table), and possible reasons for these findings.

There are key sex differences in diabetes diagnosis across the lifespan. As shown in the Table, having a diagnosis of type 2 diabetes is twice as common in female youth than male youth. Developing type 2 diabetes in youth is very concerning because the well-known associations including kidney disease, cardiovascular disease, and other serious health problems will occur at younger ages as well. In contrast to the situation in youth, middle-aged men are more likely to have type 2 diabetes than age-similar women. The concerns of the complications of type 2 diabetes are similar in middle-aged people compared to youth, but will develop later in life.

Table. Comparison of rates of type 2 diabetes in males and females across the life course

AGE GROUP	COMPARISON OF RATES OF TYPE 2 DIABETES AMONG FEMALES AND MALES
Youth < 18 years	2-to-1 ratio in females compared to males
Younger adults aged 20-49 years	Similar rates in females and males
Mid-life adults aged 50-69 years	25-50% lower rates in females than males
Older adults aged 70 and older	Similar rates in females and males

The reasons for a sex difference in the rates of diabetes across the life course are not completely understood, but one theory is that it is caused by sex differences in insulin resistance. For example, insulin levels are higher in girls than boys from birth through puberty. It is unclear if this difference is related to diet and exercise, sex-specific factors or genetic factors. These poorly understood differences highlight the need for further research into the factors driving sex differences in insulin resistance and rates of diabetes among youth. A better understanding of these factors may lead to new methods to prevent and treat type 2 diabetes in children and adolescents.

Reference: Huebschmann, A.G., Huxley, R.R., Kohrt, W.M., Zeitler P., Regensteiner JG, Reusch JEB. *Diabetologia* (2019) 62: 1761.

Let’s Talk: Conversations about Women’s Health

Inside and Out: Understanding the Important Parts of the Body and What They Mean for Your Health

December’s Let’s Talk focused on the lesser known parts of the body and why they are vitally important to our health. During this talk, three expert speakers, Drs. Sabrina Newman, MD, Ana Glesiner, MD, PhD, and Evalina Burger, MD, spoke to the community about the skin, liver, gallbladder, pancreas, and spine, discussing how each of these body parts play important functions in maintaining overall health.



February is Heart Health Month

What Every Woman Should Know About Her Heart



Heart disease is the number one killer of women in the U.S. Heart Health Month is the perfect time to learn more about what you can do to lower your chances of heart disease and recognize the signs of a heart attack so that you can act quickly.

DAILY HABITS TO BOOST HEART HEALTH	HEART ATTACK WARNING SIGNS FOR WOMEN
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Exercise regularly (30 minutes most days)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pain in your jaw, back, or upper belly
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Stay at a healthy weight	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Feeling nauseous, lightheaded, or dizzy
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Eat a balanced diet	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pain or pressure in the chest
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Limit how much alcohol you drink (one drink a day for women)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Discomfort spreading to the back, jaw, throat, or arm
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Don't smoke	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Nausea, indigestion, or heartburn
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• If you have diabetes, manage your blood sugar levels	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Fast or irregular heartbeats
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Keep your high cholesterol and high blood pressure in check	<p>Call 911 right away if you think you're having a heart attack, even if you're not sure.</p>

Go to www.cwhr.org for links to

- Daily Habits to Boost Heart Health
- Heart Attack Warning Signs
- State of Your Heart

DID YOU KNOW?

- 1 in 5 Americans will develop skin cancer in their lifetime. One blistering sunburn during childhood or adolescence may double the chances of developing melanoma.
- A significant amount of blood flows through the liver. It holds 13% of the body's blood supply at any given time.
- Women are more likely to develop gallstones.
- The pancreas has two main functions: digestion (exocrine) and blood sugar regulation (endocrine).
- Disc degeneration can lead to a 25% decrease in spinal column height.



Community Presentations

The CWHR is often asked to provide evidence-based speakers and researcher talks within our community. We are proud to partner with Arrow Electronics and AMG National Bank and Trust and regularly provide speakers to their employees and/or clients. Below are highlights of recent community presentations.

Dr. Sangeetha Chandrasekaran, Associate Professor in the Department of Surgical Dentistry at the University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus, gave a talk to Arrow employees on the importance of oral health for overall health. Dr. Chandrasekaran explained that periodontitis is a relatively common gum infection that destroys the bone that supports your teeth. As they age, women are at a higher risk for periodontitis than men due in part to decreases in estrogen levels. Symptoms of periodontitis include red/swollen gums, bleeding when brushing/flossing, gum recession, bad breath, loose teeth, migration of teeth, and pus in gums.

CWHR Director Judy Regensteiner, PhD, shared her expertise about cardiovascular disease and diabetes with employees at Arrow Electronics. Cardiovascular disease, including heart disease, stroke, and peripheral artery disease, is the leading global cause of death in men and women. Those with type 2 diabetes are at greater risk of cardiovascular disease. By performing a meta analysis of observational data, Dr. Regensteiner and her colleagues found that women with type 2 diabetes have a 25-50% greater risk of a cardiovascular event compared with men with type 2 diabetes.

Clare Paterson, PhD, spoke to AMG National Bank and Trust clients and employees about sex differences in brain development and mental health. Dr. Paterson shared her research about hormones and complications in the womb that can contribute to depression and anxiety later in life. Depression is the leading cause of disability worldwide and women have a 2 to 3 times higher incidence of depression than men.

**Get involved by participating in research studies!
Go to www.cwhr.org to learn more.**

Researcher Spotlight

Kathleen Woulfe, PhD

“The Center for Women’s Health Research gave me a chance when I needed it, helping me to become a faculty member and get things off the ground.”



Dr. Woulfe is an Assistant Professor of Cardiology, a 2019 CWHR seed grant recipient, and a current BIRCWH scholar. She is researching cardiomyopathy, a disease that affects the heart muscle and can lead to heart failure.

What motivated you to pursue health research?

I grew up in the tiny town of Pinedale, Wyoming and remember always liking science. I first began to explore research as a pre-med undergraduate student at Washington and Lee University, looking at how nicotine affects brain development. By graduate school (Thomas Jefferson University) I really fell in love with research; when I saw heart cells from an animal continue to beat under the microscope it was so cool!

Following graduate school and a five-year hiatus to spend time with my three young daughters, I was so fortunate to find the Center for Women’s Health Research. Even though it was challenging to come back to work, I’m lucky to have a career that I love. I don’t feel ‘as guilty’ taking time away from my family because what I do is meaningful. I also like to show my daughters the value of a strong work ethic and responsibility and the importance of research.

Why is a focus on women’s health and sex differences important to your research?

Better understanding how male and female hearts differ and how different stages of life affect cardiac function will help us to understand both basic heart function and the impacts of stresses and diseases of the heart.

Dilated cardiomyopathy (DCM) is a condition in which the heart’s ability to pump blood is decreased because the heart’s main pumping chamber, the left ventricle, is enlarged and weakened. DCM prevents the heart from beating efficiently and

reduces the amount of blood that is pumped to the body. We know that girls have worse outcomes than boys, but we don’t yet know why. DCM is a type of heart problem that can lead to heart failure and is especially difficult to detect in children, with many either dying or needing a transplant.

To understand normal heart function and DCM, we have a specialized way of looking at the contraction and relaxation of the heart. There are only four machines in the world that make it possible to look at this closely and I have one of them. I believe our study may well be the only one focusing on sex and age differences in DCM.

What do you hope your research will help to achieve?

We know so little about basic sex and age differences in normal heart function and diseases like DCM.

Over the long-term, I believe that figuring out what is changing the mechanics of the heart in females and males and across pediatric, adult and aging hearts will give health care providers the ability to personalize and improve therapies for everybody.

The mentoring and support of the CWHR has been invaluable in taking this critical first step, focusing on pediatric DCM and considering sex differences. Our early work has made it possible to receive a good score on my grant through the National Institute on Aging of the National Institutes of Health, and I’m hopeful through additional funding we will expand our research across the lifespan, with a continuing focus on sex differences.



*Josiane Broussard,
PhD*



*Fabrice Dabertrand,
PhD*



*Melanie Cree-Green,
MD, PhD*



*Amy Huebschmann,
MD*



Chelsea Magin, PhD

Researcher Accolades

Josiane Broussard, PhD

Is lead author of an article in *Diabetologia*, "Impact of sleep deprivation and high-fat feeding on insulin sensitivity and beta cell function in dogs."

Fabrice Dabertrand, PhD

Has been named Principal Investigator of a grant from the Penn Orphan Disease Center entitled "Pericyte contractility in CADASIL (Cerebral autosomal dominant arteriopathy with subcortical infarcts and leukoencephalopathy)." This condition affects blood flow in small blood vessels, particularly those within the brain.

Amy Huebschmann, MD

Is part of a team of research investigators from the University of Colorado who received funding from NCI Cancer MoonshotSM for a project entitled "Pragmatic implementation science approaches to assess and enhance the value of cancer prevention and control in rural primary care." This project will bring about better and faster implementation of interventions to prevent and treat cancer.

Chelsea Magin, PhD

Has been named a National Science Foundation (NSF) Faculty Early Career Development Program Award winner. This is the NSF's most prestigious award in support of junior faculty who exemplify the role of teacher-scholar through integration of outstanding research and excellent education. Additionally, Dr. Magin was selected as the Colorado Bioscience Association's Educator of the Year. Dr. Magin's lab has had three publications since this fall which have appeared in *Biomedical Physics and Engineering Express*, the *American Journal of Respiratory Cell and Molecular Biology*, and *Advanced Biosystems*, which featured the article on the cover of the journal.

Andrew Novick, MD, PhD

Presented a talk on depression in pregnancy at the 46th Annual Vail Ob/Gyn conference.

Natalie Nokoff, MD

Was selected as one of 3 BIRCWH Scholars nationally to give an oral presentation at the annual BIRCWH meeting at the National Institutes of Health on December 11, 2019. Her talk was titled, "Body composition and markers of cardiometabolic health in transgender youth on gonadotropin-releasing hormone agonists compared to cisgender youth."



Kristen Nadeau, MD



Natalie Nokoff, MD



Andrew Novick,
MD, PhD



Danielle Soranno, MD



Viral Shah, MD

Danielle Soranno, MD

Was promoted to Associate Professor and was awarded a P50 pilot grant from the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia Pediatric Center of Excellence in Nephrology to investigate the long-term cardiac impairment after acute kidney injury in pediatric patients. Her recent publication, "Matching human unilateral acute kidney injury, a reverse translational approach to investigate kidney recovery following ischemia," was selected as "Best of the American Society of Nephrology," an honor that highlights important translational work.

Viral Shah, MD

Received a grant from Insulet Corporation for his project titled "Evaluating the Safety and Effectiveness of the Omnipod Horizon™ Automated Glucose Control System in Patients with Type 1 Diabetes."

Melanie Cree-Green, MD, PhD ; Megan Kelsey, MD; and Kristen Nadeau, MD

Published a paper in the Journal of Endocrinology and Metabolism that suggests the gut microbiome may play a role in polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS) and its related metabolic conditions.

Judy Regensteiner, PhD, Delivers Keynote at the Annual Building Interdisciplinary Research Careers in Women's Health Meeting



Shown left to right are Drs. Regensteiner, Woulfe, Skaznik-Wikiel, Nokoff, and Santoro.

Judy Regensteiner, PhD, gave the Ruth L. Kirschstein Memorial Lectureship at the Building Interdisciplinary Research Careers in Women's Health (BIRCWH) annual meeting on the National Institutes of Health's main campus in Bethesda, MD. Dr. Regensteiner's talk, "Strategic Career Development: Charting the Course", was a highlight of a day of events for young investigators, their mentors, and other research scientists, organized by the NIH Office of Research on Women's Health (ORWH). Dr. Regensteiner is the second person to give the memorial lectureship, named after Ruth L. Kirschstein, MD, who had a scientific and administrative public service career at the NIH that spanned more than half a century. Following important

laboratory work on the polio vaccine, she became the first woman to direct an NIH institute, the National Institute of General Medical Sciences and later served as deputy director and acting director of NIH.



Donor Spotlight

Mary Stuart

"I hope more people will support the exciting, empowering research on women's health and sex differences at the CWHR."

Over the past 40 years, Mary Stuart has successfully juggled the demands of raising two daughters, excelling in her career as an attorney, and giving back to her community through volunteering her time and assuming leadership positions. Raised in a small town in Maine, Mary left New England in her mid-twenties to attend law school at the University of Denver. Mary met her husband Charles while clerking and then began her career as an oil and gas attorney at Holme, Roberts & Owen. After transitioning to litigation for several years, Mary focused on employment law and spent the last years of her career as a partner at Husch Blackwell working with clients in the health care industry. A highly respected attorney, Mary thrived on working with her clients to solve workplace issues.

Raising her twin daughters was always Mary's focus, but she was committed to carving out time to give back to the community by volunteering at the Colorado Bar Association's legal services programs for the indigent and serving on a number of community boards, including the Legal Aid Foundation and St. Joseph Hospital Foundation. Through her leadership with the Women's Foundation of Colorado, Mary met former CWHR advisory board chair Mary Sissel who urged her to learn more about the CWHR. As Mary astutely stated, "If Mary Sissel supports something, it must be good!" Her first introduction to the CWHR was at the third Annual Luncheon (2020 will mark the 18th Annual Luncheon), where her colleague Karen Leaffer shared the moving story about her journey with peripartum cardiomyopathy and the heartbreaking loss of her infant daughter, Jacqueline. Excited and intrigued by the cutting-edge research by CWHR researchers, Mary attended many educational events, such as the Let's Talk series offered by the CWHR, and

was extremely impressed by the quality and caliber of the research projects and researchers supported by the CWHR. "The variety of learnings about important health topics is what drew me in," Mary pointed out.

Eager to help the CWHR, Mary joined the CWHR board in 2011. Through the "adopt a researcher" program for board members, Mary experienced first-hand how shared research findings can positively impact lives. Meeting frequently with the CWHR lead scientist for community outreach, Amy Huebschmann, MD, Mary learned in more detail about why exercise is critical in the prevention and treatment of many diseases. Today, she is a strong advocate for exercise, frequently sharing with others both her personal experience and the research behind it. Mary shared, "I hope more people will support the exciting, empowering research on women's health and sex differences at the CWHR. We need more attention on this important, historically ignored area of research."

Mary's practical leadership style and strategic vision were tremendous assets throughout her tenure as Advisory Board chair from 2013-15. CWHR Director and co-founder Judy Regensteiner, PhD, emphasized that she relied on Mary for "sound advice and wisdom" especially with the CWHR's decision to host a National Conference on Women's Health and Sex Differences, which was a bold undertaking at the time but one that would elevate the awareness and importance of women's health and sex differences research.

As preparation is underway for the third National Conference on September 23-25, the CWHR and its supporters are extremely grateful to Mary Stuart for her unwavering support, vision, and encouragement during a critical time of expansion and growth.

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