

## National program develops ob-gyn researchers

**A** NATIONAL PROGRAM LAUNCHED IN 1998 AIMS TO produce a cadre of physician researchers in women's health. Twenty institutions across the country serve as sites for the Women's Reproductive Health Research Career Development Program, which was initiated by the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development to provide funding for training and mentoring that ob-gyn junior faculty need to pursue independent research careers.

Appointments as a WRHR scholar (pronounced "wer-her") range from two to five years; the length of time is determined individually to accommodate each scholar's ongoing research projects.

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## Historical photos donated to ACOG

**T**HE J. BAY JACOBS LIBRARY for the History of Obstetrics and Gynecology recently received a unique and priceless photographic donation from Life Fellow Lawrence D. Longo, MD, of Loma Linda, CA.

Dr. Longo's gift consists primarily of two photo albums, each containing more than 200 photos, that chronicle two trips the American Gynecological Club made to Europe just prior to World War I. The photos in both albums were taken by an AGC member known for his photographic skills, Dr. Richard Root Smith of Grand Rapids, MI. Dr. Longo obtained the two albums from Dr. Smith's estate through a rare book dealer.

The first album documents the group's activities on its first European tour through Germany, Austria, and Holland in the summer of 1912. Besides the usual tourist shots, there are photos of the hospitals the members visited and operations they observed and of AGC members and their hosts. The operating room scenes are dramatic and give a realistic view of operating in the early 20th century.

The second album records the activities of the second European tour in July 1914, through England, Scotland, France, Switzerland, and Germany. At the end of the tour, as European countries began declaring war on each other on Aug 1, 1914, the group abandoned plans to visit clinics in London and managed to book alternative passage home.

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## New Committee Opinions issued

### Ethical issues of sex selection

The new Committee Opinion *Sex Selection* from the ACOG Committee on Ethics opposes sex selection for nonmedical reasons in the prefertilization, postfertilization, and postimplantation stages. The committee supports offering patients procedures to prevent serious sex-linked genetic diseases but opposes sex selection for family balancing or other personal or family reasons. The document was published in the February issue of *Obstetrics & Gynecology*.

When a medical procedure is done for a purpose other than obtaining information about the sex of a fetus, yet the procedure will reveal the fetus's sex, the information should not be withheld from a pregnant woman who requests it. Consequently, it may be difficult for providers to avoid the possibility of unwittingly participating in sex selection. To minimize this possibility, providers should foster open communication with patients to clarify patient goals.

### Support of breastfeeding

A new Committee Opinion, *Breastfeeding: Maternal and Infant Aspects*, reiterates ACOG's support of breastfeeding and calls upon Fellows, other health care professionals, and employers to support women in choosing to breastfeed their infants. The document was published in the February issue of *Obstetrics & Gynecology*.

ACOG recommends exclusive breastfeeding until infants are approximately six months old, but encourages women to breastfeed as long as possible. However, the document recognizes that women often face practical obstacles to breastfeeding, and, therefore, stresses that advice and encouragement from ob-gyns are critical during preconception, prenatal, postpartum, and interconception in their patients' decision to breastfeed.

In addition, ob-gyns should be at the forefront of fostering changes in the public, such as encouraging hospitals not to provide gift packs that include free formula or formula coupons.™

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W. Thomas Gregory, MD, became a WRHR scholar at the Oregon Health Sciences University after he completed a fellowship in urogynecology there. He is now finishing his fifth and final year in the WRHR program. His research interests are in fecal incontinence, especially related to childbirth.

Initially, Dr. Gregory's research related to use of ultrasound of the anal sphincter, but he was intrigued by nerve and muscle injury of the pelvic floor and began working with the director of the electrophysiological laboratory. He trained with the fellows in the OHSU neurophysiology program, learning how to do nerve conduction studies using electromyography on biceps and quadriceps, and later applying the technique to the pudendal nerve and developing pelvic floor research protocols.

"The WRHR program provides options to tap into the infrastructure at your institution," Dr. Gregory said. "I started with one and now have two true mentors. In addition, the [program leaders] have set up regular meetings for me to talk to senior investigators way out of my field, who listen to my thought processes, help me hone my hypotheses, and give feedback on specific aims in grant writing—opening doors for me."

### PCOS clinical research

Reproductive endocrinologist Kathleen M. Hoeger, MD, was in academic clinical practice for four years at the University of Rochester when she decided to apply to be a WRHR scholar there.

"I realized that to be an investigator, I needed additional time to focus on the areas I wanted to study, and I needed training I hadn't received during my fellowship," she said.

The WRHR program provides 75% protected time for the scholars to obtain additional training and conduct research. During her stint as a WRHR scholar, Dr. Hoeger embarked on an MPH program at the university.

"The public health field would really not have been open to me had I not been in the

WRHR program," she said. "Without a doubt, the ability you have to spend the time getting to know the accomplished individuals within your own institution is instrumental. We really need to have a multidisciplinary approach to do research that's going to be productive to us as ob-gyns."

While a WRHR scholar, Dr. Hoeger worked with her mentor on research of polycystic ovary syndrome. Now the director of the reproductive endocrinology division at the University of Rochester, Dr. Hoeger is conducting a randomized clinical trial comparing the effects of lifestyle interventions and the use of metformin in adolescents with PCOS, measuring both hormonal and metabolic endpoints. Her project is funded by a National Institutes of Health grant.

### Global research goals

Gretchen S. Stuart, MD, is just starting as a WRHR scholar at the University of North Carolina. She has a master's degree in public health and tropical medicine and worked in a health program in Uganda.

Dr. Stuart applied to be a WRHR scholar at UNC specifically because of the university's international health programs.

"My goal is to establish research projects that will improve women's reproductive health care in developing countries—whether in HIV prevention, STD prevention, or contraception, and ideally a mixture of all three," Dr. Stuart said.

### Research capacity increases

Each of the 20 WRHR sites, which are designated through a competitive application process, has its own selection criteria and selects scholars in collaboration with NICHD staff. To date, there have been 117 scholars appointed to the WRHR program.™

### info

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Dr. Gregory



Dr. Hoeger



Dr. Stuart