

November 2009

AMA Women Physicians Congress Governing Council Meeting Summary A-09

This year marks the 30th anniversary of the presence of a formal women in medicine program in the AMA. The American Medical Association (AMA) Women Physicians Congress (WPC) is dedicated to identifying and addressing issues affecting women in the profession and providing an added voice in the AMA for over 60,000 women AMA members. The AMA has supported a women in medicine program since 1979 when women comprised fewer than 12% of all U.S. physicians. Twenty years later, with women at almost 20% of the physician workforce, the AMA created the WPC to serve as an advocacy forum for strengthening the voice of women in the AMA. Today the number of women physicians is 28% and nearly half of all medical students are female. This is reflected in the AMA membership and leadership as well. The percent of female delegates to the AMA House of Delegates has more than doubled in the last ten years. The WPC represents all female AMA members through an automatic enrollment process. Interested male members can opt in to join. The WPC provides an additional pathway for women to participate in and influence AMA policies and programs. In supporting these efforts, organized medicine is strengthened in its ability to respond to the individual and collective concerns of women in medicine.

The following topics were discussed by the WPC Governing Council at its meeting on Saturday June 13, 2009.

AMA-HOD Resolutions

The WPC Governing Council discussed HOD resolutions which affect women physicians and women's health.

- Gender rating and discrimination based on prior cesarean section: the WPC urges AMA to oppose the use of gender rating in setting rates, premiums, co-pays, surcharges or coverage for patients; also opposes the use of prior cesarean history as a basis for underwriting or rating insurance policies; supports maternity coverage as part of any covered benefit by individual insurance carriers.
- Domestic violence insurance discrimination: the WPC opposes the practice of discrimination of insurance benefits based on an applicant's history or perceived history as a victim of domestic violence.
- Stricter fines for violating direct-to-consumer advertisements: WPC would like to support this concept as well as include direct-to-consumer genetic testing and medical devices.
- Provision of child care in residency and fellowship training programs: WPC supports the availability of child care services or stipends for physicians in training.
- Health care disparities: WPC supports the 2003 Institute of Medicine report on health care disparities and the Coalition to End Health Care Disparities, and asks the AMA to adopt the guiding principles developed by the Coalition to drive further policy development and implementation to reduce health care disparities.
- WPC supports comprehensive-based sex education with a redirection of federal resources away from abstinence-only teaching.
- WPC encourages improving disparities in maternal mortality globally.

Joint Commission

The WPC discussed the current language in the Joint Commission Leadership Standard. This document requires all accredited health care facilities to have a code of conduct defining disruptive and inappropriate behaviors. It was noted that the old language in the 2005 Hospital Accreditation Standards

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document ensures better protection against gender discrimination, including sexual harassment, in the workplace, including but not limited to discrimination in appointments and credentialing. The WPC will write letter to Joint Commission urging to retain language from 2005 policy so that there shall be no discrimination with regard to gender, race, creed or national origin in connection with medical staff membership or clinical privileges. Of note, the AMA-OMSS has developed a model medical staff code of conduct which may be used by medical staffs in their bylaws. This document includes definitions of appropriate behavior, disruptive behavior, harassment and inappropriate behavior.

Fund for the Advancement of Women in Medicine

The WPC and AMA Foundation is implementing a new fund for the advancement of women in medicine. Lisa Egbert, Mildred Olivier, Willarda Edwards, Louito Edtje are among the steering committee members for this new effort. AMA Foundation staff members Judy Peters and Steven Churchill (Executive Director) will facilitate the development of this initiative. This Fund will have its own category on the Foundation pledge card so donations may be directed to this initiative. The Joan F. Giambalvo Memorial Scholarship program is now part of this exciting new fund.

Board of Trustees Candidate Interviews

The WPC Governing Council interviewed 6 candidates vying for 3 positions on the AMA-BOT in addition to 2 candidates running for the resident/fellow position. Each candidate was asked to share his/her views on gender disparities in physician income and advancement as well as increasing leadership development for women physicians. Based on the interview responses, GC members rated the candidates; this information was shared at the Women Physicians Caucus.

Research on Women in Medicine Issues

Through annual grants of up to \$10,000 each, the WPC *Joan F. Giambalvo Memorial Scholarship Fund* supports research on issues important to advancing women in the profession. Researchers are encouraged to study factors that shape opportunities for women in medicine and the extent to which gender affects the way physicians approach their work and career decisions. Five awards have been presented to date. The 2008 grant recipients are as follows:

- Sue Yom, MD, PhD. Dr. Yom is Assistant professor of Clinical Radiation Oncology from the University of California, San Francisco. Dr. Yom was selected for her proposal to identify women faculty leave and the costs associated by the respective institutions due to this lack of retention.
- Maurice Clifton, MD, MEd, is an Associate Dean for Admissions and Student Affairs at Mercer University School of Medicine. In his study, Dr. Clifton worked to better understand professional obstacles faced by women physicians in rural areas in order to design interventions to better target applicants to serve in these areas.

The 2009 recipient is Nicole J. Borges, PhD. Dr. Borges is the Director of Medical Education Research and an Associate Professor with the Department of Community Health at Wright State University Boonshoft School of Medicine. She and her team of investigators plan to survey a representative sample of all women physicians in academic medicine. The goal of her study is to gain perspective on how, when, and why physicians choose an academic path.

Joint AMA Section and Special Group Educational Session--Health system reform: A candid discussion
Congressman Tom Price, MD (R-Georgia), J. James Rohack, MD, AMA President-Elect, and Richard



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Deem, AMA Senior Vice President for Advocacy, led a discussion about the status of health system reform, where it is heading and what it means for physicians and patients.

Mentoring

The 3rd Annual WPC Physician Mentor Recognition Program provides an opportunity for WPC members to publicly recognize physicians who have been mentors and/or contributed to the general advancement of women in medicine. Mentors are highlighted during September Women in Medicine Month, at the AMA meetings, on the web site, and through a commemorative certificate issued to each mentor. The 2009 nomination period has been extended from April 1 through July 31, Applications are available through the WPC web site. WPC members are encouraged to take advantage of this opportunity to recognize physicians who have made a difference.



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Governing Council 2009-10

Dr. Jennifer Wiler was elected as Chair of the Governing Council. Dr. Nancy Church was elected as Vice-Chair. Dr. Carol Berkowitz completed her term on the Governing Council as of June 2009. New members of the Council include Dr. Nancy Church, re-elected AMWA representative; Dr. Jennifer Shu, At-Large member; and Soha Patel, MSS representative.

Joint Efforts with OMSS

Dr. Louito Edje, OMSS Governing Council At-Large member met with WPC Governing Council about ways both groups can collaborate on common issues. Employed physicians will make up majority of doctors in the next 15 years; women are a significant portion of employed physicians. OMSS holds educational sessions that may be of interest to women in many practice situations. The two groups may be able to partner on physician re-entry to workforce issues. We will need to work better with WPC liaisons to play a more active role in OMSS and market some OMSS leadership opportunities among our women members. Educational tracks may be a possibility at a conference if the interim meeting is eliminated and a different second AMA meeting is planned (may be combined with National Advocacy Conference in the spring for example). OMSS follows up with new meeting attendees to retain their involvement following each national meeting. There is also a designated OMSS representative at each hospital whenever possible. Similarly, WPC has liaisons for each state and specialty society. Perhaps OMSS could alert representatives about WPC and Minority Affairs Consortium in their communications.

Collaboration between AMA-WPC and AMWA and other groups with women physicians

AMWA was founded in 1915 when women were not permitted to join AMA. This organization has been both social for women physicians as well as politically active. AMA membership department staff members JJ Roesner and Jim Kirchner discussed possible ways to reach out to women physicians and racial and ethnic minority physicians who are members of other medical organizations but not AMA in hopes of benefiting both organizations by working on overlapping commonalities where we can be stronger together. AMWA and similar organizations have a narrower focus and help bond physicians with similar interests. AMA has the advantage of being possibly able to have a stronger legislative impact and influence on women's professional issues, women's health issues and women's career issues. WPC would like to play a more active role at future AMWA and other society conferences such as hosting a lunch or reception to create dialogue and obtain feedback to increase awareness about AMA subgroups with similar interests. As an example, it may be possible to promote AAP Women's Breakfast at NCE and NCE meeting as a whole to AMA members and vice versa.