

# Women in Biomedical Careers



## NIH Updates on Women in Science News for You to Use!

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*NIH Updates on Women in Science is brought to you by the [NIH Working Group on Women in Biomedical Careers](#). We encourage you to share this e-newsletter with colleagues who may find it of interest.*

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## ***NIH Responds to Article on Sex Differences in Attainment of Independent Funding by Career Development Awardees***

The NIH Office of Extramural Research has published a letter in the *Annals of Internal Medicine* addressing claims that women who receive NIH career development awards are less likely to receive subsequent independent NIH funding. NIH data shows that the underrepresentation of women as Principal Investigators on NIH grants is related to the lower application rate by women, not a lower success rate. In fact, women are equally successful on research grant applications as men. The authors of the letter, Jennifer Reineke Pohlhaus, PhD, Hong Jiang, PhD, and Jennifer Sutton, acknowledge that women may take longer than men to apply for independent research funding for a variety of reasons and that the NIH has taken steps to "foster continued participation in research by a broad population of investigators" including a [January 2009](#) policy which allows career development awardees to pursue their projects part-time, and a [December 2008](#) policy allowing new investigators to request an extension to their status as early stage investigators if they have had a lapse in research due to family or other responsibilities. NIH recently funded [14 grants](#) to support research on causal factors and interventions that promote and support the careers of women in biomedical and behavioral science and engineering.

[Women Career Development Awardees: Applying for Funding is a Leading Factor in Receiving Independent Research Support](#)

[Sex Differences in Attainment of Independent Funding by Career Development Awardees](#)

## ***NIH Will Hold Fifth Regional Meeting to Seek New Dimensions and Strategies for Women's Health Research and Advancing Women's Biomedical Careers at Emory University***

The NIH and Office of Research on Women's Health (ORWH) will be holding the fifth and final regional meeting to revise the agenda for the NIH's research priorities in women's health. Similar to the previous meetings, this meeting will feature public testimony, scientific presentations, and a number of working groups, including one focusing on women's careers in science. This meeting, which will be held at Emory University School of Medicine in Atlanta, Georgia on February 16 – 17, 2010, will focus on cardiovascular health in women. Registration will be open through February 8th at 9:00 a.m. E.S.T. The updated research agenda will be unveiled at the ORWH 20th Anniversary Celebration on September 27, 2010, at the Natcher Conference Center on the NIH Campus.

[Moving Into the Future – New Dimensions and Strategies for Women's Health Research for the National Institutes of Health](#)

## **“Women’s Adventures in Science” and “Practical Advice from Working Researchers” – Resources for Aspiring Scientists of All Ages**

*Women's Adventures in Science*, a series of books on women scientists and an accompanying [online experience](#) aimed at middle school students, is available from the National Academy of Sciences. Each book in the series, along with the corresponding summary card, is intended to explain a particular field of science – from astronomy to zoology – and chronicles the life of a contemporary, working woman scientist in that field. A reviewer from the Association for Women in Science noted that “these books are capable of breaking stereotypes and opening up the future generations of Americans to a new level of interest in science.”

For those who are further along in their careers, the organization 4researchers, which began as a project funded by the National Institute of Mental Health, disseminates practical advice about conducting research. The goal of the Web site is to “provide a rich and easily accessible resource for early, mid-level, and senior researchers who are confronted with the inevitable challenges of conducting research in the real world.” Topics covered include obtaining research funding, study design and management, collaboration, dissemination of findings, and career advancements. Articles are contributed by leading experts in their respective fields and a selection of online courses is also available for continuing education credits.

Links to these and other resources for scientists of all ages can be found on the [Resources](#) page of the Women in Biomedical Careers Web site.

[Order Women's Adventures in Science](#)

[Practical Advice from Working Researchers - 4researchers.org](#)

## ***New Reports Focus on Access to and the Gender Gap in Higher Education***

The [American Council on Education \(ACE\)](#) and the [College Board](#) recently developed and released an *Access and Diversity Toolkit* for higher education professionals as a follow up to the October 2009 policy paper *A 21st Century Imperative: Promoting Access and Diversity in Higher Education*. The toolkit addresses ten key issues for promoting access to higher education and increased diversity on campuses, including Taking a Stand: Higher Education Leadership for the 21st Century, Getting from Here to There: Managing the Process of Policy Change, Admission: Exploring Key Strategies for Achieving Success, and Mythbusters: Correcting Common Misunderstandings. For each of the ten issues, the toolkit provides an explanation of the issue, definitions of key terms and concepts, the policy context, empirical data, relevant literature references, and key action steps.

This month, the ACE released a paper examining the gender gap among students and graduates in various racial and ethnic groups at American colleges and universities. The findings presented in *Gender Equity in Higher Education: 2010*, include analysis of data from the U.S. Census Bureau and the U.S. Department of Education indicating that for all groups except Hispanics, the gender gap for enrollment and degree attainment has reached a plateau - favoring women, who obtain 57% of bachelors degrees and represent 57% of enrollees. For Hispanics, the percentage of women in higher education continued to rise from 55% in 1999-2000 to 58% in 2007-2008. The study's author sites the

low rate of high school completion for non-US born Hispanic males, who make up one third of Hispanic young adults, as a key factor in this disparity. Hispanic women born in the US obtain bachelors degrees at the same rate as African American women; however this rate is lower than that of Caucasians and the gap is greater now than in the 1960s and 1970s.

[A 21st Century Imperative: Promoting Access and Diversity in Higher Education](#)

[College Gender Gap Appears to be Stabilizing with One Notable Exception, American Council on Education Analysis Finds](#)

### ***New Studies Indicate that “Housework Is an Academic Issue” and that Mentoring Can Help Female Assistant Professors***

A study by Londa Schiebinger, Ph.D., and Shannon K. Gilmartin, Ph.D., which appeared in the January-February, 2010 edition of *Academe Online* examines the division of labor between women scientists, their partners, and those they pay to handle household chores, parenting, and elder care. The study found that in most dual-career couples, women take on the majority of household tasks, and even when some tasks are “outsourced” reducing the total number of hours needed for household tasks, women still take on the majority of the remaining hours. The study did point out that academic couples did have a more egalitarian distribution than couples where one partner was not academic, and that academic men are more likely to take an active role in cooking and grocery shopping. Interestingly, junior women faculty and senior men faculty have similar rates of chore outsourcing, while the most productive senior women scientists report the highest level of outsourcing – twenty percent of all household tasks. Given the correlation found between scientific productivity and household outsourcing, the authors recommend that universities consider incorporating a household assistance allotment into the faculty benefit packages.

A working paper from the National Bureau of Economic Research addresses another key issue for women in scientific careers – mentoring. In the paper *Can Mentoring Help Female Assistant Professors? Interim Results from a Randomized Trial*, authors Francis D. Blau, Ph.D., Janet M. Currie, Ph.D., Rachel T.A. Croson, Ph.D., and Donna K. Ginther, Ph.D., report on the Committee on the Status of Women in the Economic Profession (CSWEP) Mentoring Program (CeMENT). To evaluate the effectiveness of the program, participants were randomly assigned to either the “treatment” group or the control group. Junior faculty in the treatment group were invited to attend a two day workshop during which they were able to network with senior women faculty and get feedback on a manuscript or grant application circulated prior to the workshop. Plenary sessions on publishing, getting grants and tenure, and other topics were also held for participants. Three cohorts have already been through the process, beginning in 2004, 2006, and 2008, and two more are planned in upcoming years. This paper notes that for at least two of the three cohorts, while there was no difference in publications between the treatment and control groups prior to the workshops, those in the treatment group were more likely to have a paper in a top tier journal, more total papers, and more federally funded grants after participating in the workshops. While the authors acknowledge that it is too early to say whether the intervention will increase the probability that women remain in academia in the long term, the initial results are encouraging and seem to indicate that proactive mentoring can have a measurable positive impact on publication and funding rates.

[Housework is an Academic Issue](#)

[Can Mentoring Help Female Assistant Professors? Interim Results from a Randomized Trial](#)

### ***Highlighting Best Practices – The Rockefeller University***

In 2000, Dr. Paul Greengard, the Vincent Astor Professor at the Rockefeller University was awarded the Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine. In honor of his mother, Pearl Meister Greengard, who died giving birth to him, he and his wife, the sculptor Ursula von Rydingsvard, donated his entire monetary share of the Prize to the University to create a major international prize which recognizes the accomplishments of outstanding women scientists. Winners of the Pearl Meister Greengard Prize include Elizabeth Blackburn, Carol Greider, and Vicki Lundblad, for their insight into cellular aging and cancer – over a year before the Drs. Blackburn and Greider were awarded the Nobel Prize.

While Dr. Greengard provided the initial impetus for this Prize, efforts by the Rockefeller University to recognize and support women in science span all career levels. The Women & Science (W&S) initiative was established in 1998 to highlight the crucial role of basic research in addressing scientific challenges related to women's health, showcase the contributions of women scientists, and create a program of support for women scientists. Educational opportunities for young women in Rockefeller's summer research programs for high school and college students, 59 graduate and 54 postdoctoral fellowships for outstanding women graduate students and postdoctoral researchers, the University Child and Family Center, and the Rebecca C. Lancefield Professorship for a senior woman scientist have all been funded by the W&S. Annual fall and spring breakfast programs as well as the Spring Lecture and Luncheon, which feature Rockefeller scientists and guest speakers on topics relevant to women's health, are hosted by the University President. Rockefeller has made recruiting women faculty a priority and has set up a special fund to offset the costs of enhanced recruitment efforts.

Today, 40 percent of Rockefeller's 270 scientists—including research and clinical scientists, assistant and associate professors, and tenured senior professors— are women. In addition, W&S has encouraged many of its supporters to become more active with the University's Board of Trustees and the Rockefeller University Council, thereby broadening the role of women in the governance and leadership of the University. Women now constitute one-third of the Rockefeller Board, three times the representation of women just twelve years ago. The University's commitment to achieving greater gender balance on the Board of Trustees is an example of the importance of an institutional commitment to inclusion of women in leadership and according to materials provided by the Rockefeller University "has sent a powerful signal to potential new faculty that Rockefeller provides an environment conducive to participation—at the highest levels—by women."

[The Rockefeller University Women & Science Initiative](#)

[The Pearl Meister Greengard Prize](#)



## ***Women Scientists in Action – Nancy Pandhi, M.D., M.P.H.***

Nancy Pandhi, M.D., M.P.H., is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Family Medicine at the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health. Her research is directed towards redesign of outpatient health care to improve the health outcomes for older adults.

Dr. Pandhi received her B.A. in Political Science from the University of Chicago and her M.D. from Medical College of Virginia. She decided to go into medicine after learning about the striking health disparities that exist for underserved populations. She then chose Family Medicine as a specialty because of its emphasis on developing a comprehensive, holistic approach to caring for patients in the context of their community and culture.

After receiving her medical degree, Dr. Pandhi continued her training as a resident at the Shenandoah Valley Family Practice where she developed and implemented a curriculum focusing on spirituality and medicine with funding from the John Templeton Foundation. This curriculum focused on identifying and maintaining sources of well-being for residents, faculty, and patients. Dr. Pandhi was a recipient of the American Academy of Family Physicians Bristol-Myers Squibb Award for Excellence in Graduate Medical Education and the Resident Teaching Award and has served in several national leadership roles, including participation as the resident member of the Family Medicine Residency Review Committee and the resident representative to the board of the Association of Family Medicine Residency Directors.

Dr. Pandhi moved to the University of Wisconsin where she has been funded by a series of NIH training and career development programs. Initially a fellow in the Department of Family Medicine's Ruth L. Kirschstein National Research Service Award (NRSA) training grant program, she later became a scholar in the Building Interdisciplinary Research Careers in Women's Health Research (BIRCWH) program. Dr. Pandhi was recently awarded a Mentored Clinical Scientist Career Development Award by the National Institute on Aging. She credits the strong mentorship aspects of these programs as a critical component of her success to date, saying, "I have been so fortunate to have enthusiastic and supportive mentors that are helping me acquire the knowledge, skills, and experiences necessary to attack my research questions with appropriate rigor. Their guidance is critical as I develop a research program that combines my passion for scientific inquiry with a desire to improve the lives of vulnerable populations on a larger scale than the individual needs that I assist with in the clinic."

While progressing as a researcher from a fellow to an Assistant Professor, Dr. Pandhi has also continued as a student and a clinician. At the same as pursuing a successful research program as an NRSA fellow, she also earned a Masters in Public Health and is currently pursuing a Ph.D. in Population Health Sciences under the mentorship of Dr. Maureen Smith. Dr. Smith, an Associate Professor in the Departments of Population Health Sciences and Family Medicine whose research program examines the effectiveness and equity of the health care system for aging and chronically ill persons, notes that "Dr. Pandhi brings extraordinary creativity and commitment to improving care for vulnerable patients in both her clinical practice and her research." Dr. Pandhi maintains a clinical practice at with Access Community Health Centers. She also is the medical director for the [Southside MEDiC clinic](#), a student-run free clinic whose mission is to provide medical care to uninsured members of the Madison community while enhancing practical educational opportunities for health professions students. "Practicing in clinical settings that care for the underserved gives context for my research questions and keeps me in touch with questions that are important to answer," she says.

The long-term goal of Dr. Pandhi's research program is to develop and implement a redesigned medical home with optimal continuity of care supporting vulnerable older adults' health. The medical home provides the individual with a more comprehensive approach to the management of chronic or acute conditions, incorporating preventive care by facilitating partnerships between the individual, his or her personal physician, and when appropriate, the patient's family.

Dr. Pandhi is using data from the Wisconsin Longitudinal Study to research the effects of continuity of care on older adults' health. [Her specific research questions are](#): 1) whether continuity of care with an individual physician has an effect over and above continuity with a health care site; 2) the characteristics of vulnerability in older adults and how they relate to continuity and health outcomes; and 3) the effects of distinct aspects of continuity of care (such as the sharing of information and the components of the doctor-patient relationship) on older adults' health.

With her diverse background and extensive training and research experience, Dr. Pandhi hopes to help change the way older adults receive their health care. Her work is both topical and timely as the US population ages and health care costs continue to spiral upwards. It is her hope that her research will result in improved quality of life for older adults by determining which aspects of the ambulatory care experience can best support the health of this population.

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