

Health & SCIENCE



Medical Schools Challenged To Improve Women Leader Record

The thousands of women who compose more than 40 percent of medical school classes and 47 percent of U.S. Ph.D. programs are still taught largely by men, despite years of efforts to bolster the presence of women in medical education as both students and faculty, male medical school professors today outnumber women professors by 10 to one. To Achieve a better gender balance, the Association of American Medical Colleges has launched a new national initiative to make medical school and teaching hospital leaders more aware of the barriers women face in moving up the academic medicine

ladder, to help initiate necessary cultural changes in medical school communities, and to provide women with enhanced mentoring and support as they pursue careers in medical education.

"Failing to achieve a greater balance between women and men is simply not an option if academic medicine is to meet the leadership challenges it faces," said Jordan Cohen AAMC president. "Too many men have chosen not to involve themselves in improving the gender

balance, dismissing it as a 'women's issue.' Men, as well as, women must urge the shattering of barriers to

gender balance as our issue-our joint social obligation--if we are to achieve success."

The initiative, "Increasing Women's Leadership in Academic Medicine," was developed by an AAMC committee of medical school deans, teaching hospitals leaders, faculty and students. In their report on the project, the committee contends that women continue to be blocked disproportionately from achieving leadership positions in academic medicine for a host of complex reasons including isolation, cultural stereotypes, discrimination, sexism, family responsibilities and a paucity of

mentors as. As result of this environment, the percentage of women faculty who have achieved the rank of full professor has remained stagnant at 9 percent since 1980; only 5 percent of medical department chairs are women; fewer than 10 percent of major teaching hospital CEO's are women; and only 4 women are medical school deans.

Fostering women's leadership is a pragmatic move that will prove to be a key factor for the viability of academic medicine in general and of individual institutions in particular, the committee asserts. For example, those institutions that work to dis-

solve gender-related barriers will be more successful in recruiting the best and brightest as grate numbers of women pursue medical and science careers. Increasing the number of women leaders and faculty also will provide academic medical centers with a competitive advantage because women pursue primary care careers more often than men and are the preferred health care providers of women, who make the majority of health decisions for their families, and who access the health care system more often than men.

Greater leadership by women also may change the culture of academic

medicine in ways beneficial to both sexes. "Increasing the number of women leaders will bring greater diversity and balance to an institution's leadership, benefiting students, residents and patients," said Janet Bickel AAMC associate VP for institutional planning and development.

To assist medical schools and teaching hospitals in their efforts to enhance the leadership of women, the AAMC committee recommends developing and mentoring women faculty administrators, residents and students, improving pathways to leadership and fostering readiness to change.

Survey Shows How Food Lovers Trim Fat

A new survey asked food experts how taste measures up against low-fat when cooking and choosing foods and found that taste wins.

The Taste What's Next Poll II, a survey of food writers, chefs, cookbook authors and dietitians, found that nearly all food experts (98%) try to create meals that are both great-tasting and low-fat. Top ways food pros do that, use a wider variety of vegetables (88%), use a wider variety of herbs and spices (83%), choose leaner meats (76%), use a wider variety of beans and grains (75%).

"Even food experts are looking for ways to trim the fat from their diets, but they're not skimping on flavor," says Rob-

in Kline, a certified culinary professional and director of the Pork Information Bureau (PIB) for the National Pork Producers Council (NPPC). "The key to eating well is understanding food options."

"Fresh pork is definitely part of the equation," says cookbook author and syndicated food columnist Jeanne Jones.

According to U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) figures, a three-ounce serving of pork tenderloin has just 4.1 grams of fat and 139 calories.

"Skinless chicken breast has always fit a low-fat lifestyle, and pork has a similar place in a low-fat diet, too," says Jones, who often includes fresh pork as a substitute for chicken in her

"Cook It Light" recipes. "And when you tell people you're serving pork tenderloin, they don't think they're eating diet food."

For advice on including meat in a low-fat diet, three out of four food experts recommend reducing the portion size (78%) and eating leaner cuts of meat (73%).

For a meal with flavorful vegetables and lean meat, Kline recommends Mediterranean Pork Kabobs, skewers of pork cubes, marinated artichoke hearts and red bell pepper (recipe included).

More than half of all food professionals (54%) say it's difficult to order low-fat choices in restaurants. A third of food professionals (31%) say they analyze the menu descriptions before making choices.

When seeking low-fat restaurant items, Gand suggests that diners zone in on menu descriptions. "Cooking methods offer clues to finding low-fat options," Gand explains. "The words: 'baked, grilled, poached and steamed' point to preparations that use less oils."

The sky's the limit for a third of professionals (33%) who say they're not concerned with fat or calories when eating out. Less than half (44%) order an item that they know is low-fat.

"People who won't use cream in their own home cooking often go to restaurants and order a meal with a rich sauce," Jones says. "Food experts--like most people -- will enjoy any food in moderation."

New Report On Children

In support of the national day of commitment to children on June 1 -- Stand For Children -- Children First for Oregon is releasing a new report called "County Data For Community Action: 1996 Status of Oregon's Children." The report provides 36 fact sheets with information of how counties are doing on 14 indicators of child well-being and reports on progress toward meeting the 1995 statewide benchmarks. Information is included on how to use the county data to improve the quality of how to use the findings in the report for community action.

"The report's findings highlight the need for all Oregonians to get involved in turning things around for our children, if we are to reach the Oregon Benchmarks for Children and Families," said Gary Dombroff, Executive Director. "We hope all Oregonians will join the Stand For Children effort by pledging to change at least one thing in his or her life in order to put children first -- anything from reading daily to your own child to volunteering in your local school."

The Children First report compares county data rates in 1990 to 1994/95 and assesses whether there was a

change for better or worse, or no change for each of the 36 counties. It found several clear trends that were true for the majority of counties across Oregon. The percent of women receiving adequate prenatal care has increased in 30 counties (however, no counties have achieved the 1995 benchmark of 95 percent). In addition mortality rate among infants has decreased in 21 counties and in 27 counties childcare space is available.

Crimes against individuals has increased in 26 counties and the juveniles arrest rate has increased in 27 counties. Teen suicide has increased in 24 counties.

"The first step to improving the quality of life for Oregon's children is to become better informed about the overall condition of the children in our county and to identify the issues that need attention," said report author, Swati Adarkar. "We are hoping that the county profiles will provide communities with a snapshot of your children and families are doing on some important indices of community health and well-being and that the suggested action steps will help more people to get involved in reaching the childhood benchmarks."

Chinese medicine:

Why It Works How You Can Use It

The Northwest China Council, Oregon College of Oriental Medicine, and Oregon Acupuncture Association present Chinese Ways of Health: A Day of Traditional Chinese Medicine, from 9:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Saturday, June 15, at Portland State University's Smith Center Ballroom, 1825 SW Broadway, 3rd floor.

Chinese medicine and approaches to health have grown dramatically in popularity in the past several years. Not only have more people turned to Chinese herbs, acupuncture, and other Chinese medical approaches to maintain or improve their health, western doctors who have tradition-

ally used western techniques (and perhaps, in the past, questioned the effectiveness of Chinese medical techniques) are incorporating more and more Chinese concepts and techniques into their practices.

Oregonians can find out more about what Chinese medicine is like, why it works, and how they might use aspects for their own health needs. Participants can learn how to choose an acupuncturist, how traditional Chinese medicine uses herbs and nutrition, basic concepts of taiji (t'ai chi) and qigong (ch'i gung), the philosophy behind Chinese medicine, and more.

A half-day clinic will allow participants to try acupuncture, Chinese herbs, and massage.

Participants can also take part in special sessions on women's health, pediatrics, the use of acupuncture to treat chemical dependency, qigong, the treatment of HIV/AIDS, nutrition, treating pain, treating allergies and sinus infections, treating stress and emotional issues, sports injuries, and the philosophy of Chinese medicine.

Walk-ins are welcome as space allows; all lunches must be reserved by June 12. For more information, call the Northwest China Council, 503/725-4567

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Can Hormones Help Memory?

Kaiser Permanente's Center for Health Research is one of 38 sites throughout the U.S.-- and the only Northwest site--which will be evaluating the role of hormone replacement therapy in slowing the onset of memory loss and dementia. The Center for Health Research already is participating in the landmark 15-year Women's Health Initiative, a nationwide study which seeks to learn how to prevent the three major causes of death and disability in older women: heart disease, cancer (breast and colorectal), and osteoporosis.

The Women's Health Initiative Memory Study is the largest study of its kind and will involve 8,000 postmenopausal women age 65 and older. The six-year, \$16 million effort will try to answer the question if estrogen alone or the combination of estrogen and progesterin will delay the progression of dementia, such as Alzheimer's.

Alzheimer's disease is the most common form of dementia, which causes a loss of mental capacity. Data have shown that women are up to three times more likely than men to develop Alzheimer's disease, which is the fourth leading cause of death among adults. It currently affects more than four million Americans; this number is expected to triple by the middle of the next century.

About 300 local women will be selected from the larger study to participate in the memory trial. Women interested in joining the Women's

Health Initiative can call the Center for Health, Portland 335-2450, Vancouver 418-6002, Oregon outside Portland 1-800-732-7885.

"This new arm of the Women's Health Initiative is an important addition to the overall research effort," says Barbara Valanis, Dr. P.H., and principle investigator of the Portland study. "There are many forms of dementia, and the prevalence doubles every five years beginning at about age 60. The preventive approaches being tested in the study--such as hormone replacement therapy--have shown promise but have not yet been proven. That's why this research is so important."

Wyeth-Ayerst Laboratories is funding the memory study arm of the Women's Health Initiative. It also has supplied hormones for the over-

all Women's Health Initiative study.

Kaiser Permanente's Center for Health Research received nearly \$10 million to conduct the WHI study. The CHR was founded in 1964 as a not-for-profit research institute, conducts research in several major areas, including clinical trials and epidemiology studies; studies on health behavior, research methods, and the use of medical care services; and testing of innovations in the organization, financing and delivery of health care.

Kaiser Permanente is a group practice health maintenance organization (HMO) providing medical care to about 390,000 people in Northwest Oregon and Southwest Washington. More than 155,000 people also receive dental care from the not-for-profit HMO.

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