



# Women First Research Coalition

## WFRC Third Quarter 2022 Activities Update

### Message from New WFRC Co-Chairs

Dear WFRC members,

Thank you for your continued support of and participation in the Women First Research Coalition (WFRC). We are so pleased with all that the WFRC has accomplished in the past year, and we look forward to continuing this important work in the coming year.

On September 1, we took over as the new co-chairs of the coalition. We appreciate the work that Laurel Rice and Nanette Santoro did in their time as past co-chairs, and we look forward to working with current past co-chairs Abbey Berenson and Melissa Simon to build on that progress. As the year progresses, please contact us with ideas and issues your organizations are encountering the coalition can support and advance.

As the new co-chairs for the Women First Research Coalition (WFRC), we wanted to provide a brief introduction for those of you who we may not know well.

- Dr. Lisa Barroilhet is an Associate Professor with Tenure and the Dolores A. Buchler Professor in Gynecologic Oncology in the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology at the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health. She recently served as the Interim Chair of her department. Her NIH-supported laboratory focuses on ovarian cancer prevention and cellular metabolism. In addition to her translational research efforts, she has been the site PI for more than 40 clinical trials in the last ten years. She is currently the PI of three investigator-initiated trials at her institution and one of three PI's on a large international ovarian cancer clinical trial.

She is a committed advocate, mentor, and physician scientist who is committed to supporting and engaging the next generation of researchers. She is excited to continue to fight gender-based disparities in research funding as one of the WFRC co-chairs.

- Dr. Irina Burd is a member of the Society for Reproductive Investigation (SRI) and starting on October 17 she will be the Chair of the University of Maryland School of Medicine Department of Obstetrics, Gynecology & Reproductive Services. Previously, she was the Professor and Director of the Integrated Research Center for Fetal Medicine and Director of the Maternal-Fetal Medicine Fellowship program at the Johns Hopkins University (JHU). During her time at JHU, she has focused on bringing together clinicians and basic and clinical researchers across the institution with diverse training backgrounds and expertise to elevate science in the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology to the next level. She has worked to integrate voices from the advocacy and education realms to better serve the patient community, and to educate future generations of world-class physicians, physician-scientists, and scientists.

Mentoring women and underrepresented minorities in science and medicine has always been her priority and passion. While her research has been funded by NICHD and NIDA, for bench, translational and human research in women's health, she recognizes how difficult it is to obtain

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#### SUPPORTING ORGANIZATIONS

AMERICAN COLLEGE OF OBSTETRICIANS & GYNECOLOGISTS • AMERICAN GYNECOLOGICAL & OBSTETRICAL SOCIETY • AMERICAN SOCIETY FOR REPRODUCTIVE MEDICINE • AMERICAN UROGYNECOLOGIC SOCIETY • INFECTIOUS DISEASE SOCIETY FOR OBSTETRICS & GYNECOLOGY • NORTH AMERICAN SOCIETY FOR PEDIATRIC AND ADOLESCENT GYNECOLOGY • SOCIETY FOR ASSISTED REPRODUCTIVE TECHNOLOGY • SOCIETY FOR ACADEMIC SPECIALISTS IN GENERAL OBSTETRICS AND GYNECOLOGY • SOCIETY OF FAMILY PLANNING • SOCIETY OF GYNECOLOGIC ONCOLOGY • SOCIETY FOR MATERNAL-FETAL MEDICINE • SOCIETY FOR REPRODUCTIVE ENDOCRINOLOGY AND INFERTILITY • SOCIETY FOR REPRODUCTIVE INVESTIGATION • SOCIETY FOR WOMEN'S HEALTH RESEARCH

NIH funding due to lack of adequate government support. She is passionate about the field of Women's Health and looks forward to working with the WFRC to improve support for women's health research.

We look forward to working with all of you in the WFRC during 2022 and 2023, and please do not hesitate to reach out with any questions or concerns that arise.

Sincerely,

Lisa and Irina

## **Legislative Activities**

### Fiscal Year 2023 Appropriations

The WFRC was pleased that our report language calling for a National Academy of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine (NASEM) study on women's health research, and the creation of a Research Condition, Disease Categorization (RCDC) category for menopause at the National Institutes of Health were included in the Senate Democrats draft report that accompanies the final FY 2023 Labor-HHS appropriations bill. It is very promising that this language was included in the House Appropriations Committee approved report and Senate draft. However, this language will not be final until the fiscal year 2023 spending package is approved, and this language is deemed to be in effect.

### Momnibus 2.0

Representative Lauren Underwood (D-IL) released a request for information on a Momnibus 2.0 legislative package that would address a broad range of women's health issues and policy priorities beyond maternal health, which was the focus of the first Momnibus. The WFRC submitted feedback to Rep. Underwood on a number of topics that should be included in the package, including preconception counseling, implementation research, COVID-19 and long COVID, and pelvic floor disorders. We also recommended specific legislation ideas including additional funding for training programs, the creation of a Biomedical Research Workforce Dashboard, the establishment of a "research in residency" program using the R38 mechanism in obstetrics and gynecology to be housed at NICHD, support for a national mentoring network for physician-scientists in obstetrics and gynecology, the development of a strategic plan and timeline for supporting women's health implementation research, and support for increased representation in research and clinical trials for pregnant and lactating individuals.

### Menopause Research Act

The WFRC met with the lead sponsor of the [Menopause Research Act](#), Representative Cindy Axne (D-IA). The bill would require the NIH to evaluate all menopause-related research, identify gaps, identify the safety and effectiveness of current treatments, and identify research funding. It would also require NIH to develop a strategic plan to report on findings and resolve the identified gaps, as well as to identify topics in need of further research. The WFRC has endorsed the bill and looks forward to working with the co-sponsors to gain support moving forward.

## **Agency Outreach**

### WFRC-NCI Meeting

On July 6, the WFRC met with National Cancer Institute Acting Director Dr. Doug Lowy and his colleagues Elise Kohn, Head of Gynecologic Cancer Therapeutics in the Clinical Investigations Branch, MK Holohan,

Director of the Office of Government and Congressional Relations, and Maureen Clark, Program Analyst in the Office of Government and Congressional Relations. We discussed several important issues including OB/GYN oncology workforce issues, research gaps on gynecologic cancer, and implementation research on cervical cancer screening and increasing HPV vaccination. Dr. Lowy and his team highlighted areas of relevant ongoing research and training opportunities and they promised to follow up with the WFRC on their experience with NCI's Research in Residency program. We also asked Dr. Lowy for an update on the president's cancer moonshot; however, he informed us that the initiative was very much in the development phase, and he did not have information to share.

#### WFRC-NICHD Meeting

On September 6, the WFRC met with *Eunice Kennedy Shriver* National Institute of Child Health and Human Development Director Dr. Diana Bianchi, and with Natasha Williams, the head of the NICHD Legislation and Public Policy Branch. Dr. Bianchi provided an update on the IMPROVE Initiative, as well as NICHD's work to include research-focused asks in the Vice President's Maternal Morbidity and Mortality Blueprint. We discussed research training programs, including the WRHR and BIRCWH programs. There was also a discussion on NICHD's non-pregnancy related research, and how NICHD is partnering with ORWH and other I/Cs on implementing the recommendations from the 2021 Consensus Conference. Dr. Bianchi encouraged the WFRC to be in more regular contact with her to discuss areas of mutual interest.

#### Outreach to President's Cancer Panel

The WFRC sent a letter to Dr. Carol Brown, an OB/GYN oncologist who was recently appointed to the President's Cancer Panel. The letter congratulated Dr. Brown on her appointment and recommended a focus on the following areas of women's cancer research: addressing the rising incidence and mortality of gynecologic cancers; increasing funding for research in gynecologic oncology; reducing gynecologic cancer health disparities; and increasing training opportunities in cancer research.

#### **Agency Submissions**

##### ORWH Strategic Plan

The ORWH released a request for information on the next iteration of their strategic plan. The current strategic plan expires in 2023, and the next iteration will build upon the work that ORWH has done over the last 5 years. The WFRC submitted comments with suggestions for the new strategic plan, which included recommendations on changes to the current Key Goals that would better reflect recent scientific advances. The comments recommended more explicit inclusion of pregnant and lactating people throughout the strategic plan, as well as the inclusion of pelvic floor disorders (PFDs) in the queue of female reproductive health conditions and illnesses. We also recommended adding a goal to the strategic plan that would provide additional funding for implementation, analysis, and dissemination of research findings. We look forward to reviewing how our recommendations are incorporated into the strategic plan.

#### **Agency Activities**

##### ORWH Awards New BIRCWH Scholars

The ORWH awarded all 19 Building Interdisciplinary Research Careers in Women's Health (BIRCWH) programs an additional scholar for the next two years. This is a result of the WFRC's advocacy in FY 2022, where we successfully advocated for an additional \$4 million for the BIRCWH program.

### National Cancer Institute Annual Plan and Budget Proposal

The National Cancer Institute (NCI) released their [Annual Plan and Budget Proposal for FY 2024](#), which totaled \$9,988,000,000. The annual plan provides an assessment of the challenges and opportunities that face the cancer research community and shares the impact of the NCI-supported research through patient and researcher stories. The plan features four special scientific topics: persistent poverty and cancer, asymptomatic multi-cancer detection, cell therapy to treat cancer, and undruggable cancer targets. WFRC has already communicated with NCI's incoming director, Dr. Monica Bertagnoli, and will be following up on how the Institute can advance research on gynecologic cancers as part of this plan.

### ORWH Launches New Pilot Program Supporting Women Scientists

ORWH, in partnership with the National Institute of Arthritis and Musculoskeletal and Skin Diseases (NIAMS), is [launching](#) the Team Science Leadership Scholars Program (LSP), which is a pilot program that will support and train scholars by helping them acquire and hone team science leadership and mentoring skills. The pilot program aims to improve women's health by supporting the research and development of scholars who specialize in women's health as it relates to autoimmunity and immune-mediated diseases and in related scientific and clinical topics.

### NIDDK Launches New Program on Racial and Ethnic Equity

In spring of 2022, the NIDDK [launched](#) the Race Ahead program, which provides participants with tools and a professional network to advance equity, diversity, inclusion and accessibility at the NIDDK. This is the first program of its kind at the NIH and launched with a cohort of 28 individuals representing a diverse cross-section of NIDDK staff and leadership.

## **Organizational Update**

### WFRC Launches Twitter Handle

The WFRC is now on Twitter! You can follow us [@WFRCcoalition](#) and stay up to date on our advocacy work.

## **Funding Opportunities from NIH I/Cs**

### **Notice of Special Interest: Administrative Supplements for Research on Women's Health in the IDeA States ([NOT-GM-22-005](#))**

Application Due Date: October 17, 2022

### **Galvanizing Health Equity Through Novel and Diverse Educational Resources (GENDER) R25 ([RFA-OD-22-015](#))**

Application Due Date: October 27, 2022

### **Maternal Health Research Centers of Excellence (U54 Clinical Trial Optional) ([RFA-HD-23-035](#))**

Letter of Intent Due Date: November 2, 2022