

Supplement to the January 2005

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WOMEN IN DERMATOLOGY: Coming into Their Own

The Women's Dermatologic Society has changed dramatically over the past 30 years. Members share their insights on the past, present and future of this dynamic Society.

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Letter to Our Readers

The Women's Dermatologic Society Ushers in a New Era.

Keith Greathouse
Vice President Marketing, Dermik Laboratories, Inc.



Keith Greathouse

The late 1990s and early millennium years will be memorable ones in medicine not only for the significant treatment advances that occurred in nearly every specialty, but also for the nearly meteoric growth in the numbers of women entering the medical field.

In 2003, for the first time in history, the majority of medical school applicants were women — clear support for the American Medical Association's recent prediction that by 2010 more than 40% of all practicing physicians will be women.

The growing representation of women in dermatology is reflective of this trend: In 1980, only 26% of dermatology residents were women; a decade later that number had nearly doubled, to 48%. Today, more than one-third of practicing dermatologists are women, according to the American Academy of Dermatology. Of the Academy's U.S. membership of 10,000, nearly 3,900 are women.

So it is not surprising that along with the growing numbers of women dermatologists, the Women's Dermatologic Society has recently passed the 1,000 member mark. What began as a handful of women meeting for tea in the late 1960s at the American Academy of Dermatology meeting has grown into a strong organization that offers mentoring, networking and educational programs and fosters camaraderie among the women — and men — who are members of the WDS.

Dermik Laboratories is proud to sponsor this first ever supplement for the Women's Dermatologic Society. We have enjoyed watching the Society take shape over the years and produce many notable leaders in dermatology. I have been a member of the WDS since 1996, and I strongly encourage you to join. We hope to soon see the Women's Dermatologic Society grow by a 1,000 more members.

Keith Greathouse



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Reflections

A look at the Women's Dermatologic Society
from 1973 to 2004.

By Wilma F. Bergfeld, M.D.

First President, Women's Dermatologic Society 1973-1979



Wilma F. Bergfeld, M.D.

This year, the Women's Dermatologic Society (WDS) celebrates the thirtieth anniversary of its first Annual Luncheon, and what a success the Society has had!

We've seen the Society grow from 50 members to more than 1,100, and we've seen the positive impact that the Society's professional leadership has had in dermatology and medicine.

The Society's vision has continued to focus on fostering a network of women dermatologists that encourages friendships, personal and professional growth, women mentoring women, education and a community initiative.

For many years, the WDS has served as a refuge and training ground for women dermatologists.

So How Did All This Begin?

In the late 1960s at the American Academy of Dermatology meeting, Minerva Buerk, Thelma Warshaw, and Miriam Reed invited women dermatologists to Minerva's suite for a social conversation and tea. This was one of the first steps in organizing women dermatologists.

Then, in the early 1970s, Walter Shelley recognized that women dermatologists were underrepresented as speakers

at the annual AAD meeting, and he asked Miriam Reed to sponsor a women dermatologists' organizational meeting to discuss the need for a women dermatology society. During this meeting, I was quite outspoken regarding the need for such a society. To my amazement, I was elected president (1973 to 1979), and Barbara Way, the secretary-treasurer.

Welcoming Change but Keeping a Strong Vision

More recently, the WDS has even encouraged male dermatologists to benefit from the training and mentorship programs provided by the Society. However, since the beginning, male dermatologists have been members and have served on the Society's board of directors.

Over the years, the WDS has revisited and re-endorsed its original vision and expanded its mentoring activities to include young and mature colleagues, medical students and international colleagues.

But it was in the banner year of 2004, that the Society came of age, reaching a milestone number of 1,000 members.

Not only have we increased our membership, but we've expanded the activities of the WDS to include a successful outreach community activity — the 2004-2005 Women's LPGA Sun Safety Initiative.

Shaping the New Society

To get the new WDS underway, a core of women dermatologists volunteered to serve on an executive committee, including: E. Dorinda Shelley, Thelma Warshaw, Maria Turner, Gloria Graham, Margaret Gray Wood, Wesley Galen, Alice Palmer and Frances Storrs. We met with Brad Claxton, the AAD executive director, who helped us devise a plan to enhance the participation of women dermatologists in the annual AAD meeting. Basically, we asked all qualified and

interested women to send an abstract to the AAD's program directors and copy the president, executive director and the scientific assembly chair.

By the next year, we saw a 50% increase in participation. At this point, another enduring activity was initiated — the Annual WDS Sunday Luncheon. This luncheon continues to celebrate the uniqueness of the Society and features networking, friendship-building, mentoring and leadership educational programs, sponsor contributions and special awards.

Over the years, the WDS has sponsored numerous leadership and vision retreats which have reconfirmed its activities and helped its members to bond.

Overcoming an Unwanted Label

In the beginning, I think that many of the Society's members were concerned that we might be identified as members of a sexist organization. However, this fear has long been abolished by the steadfast and purposeful pursuits of its membership. Membership continues to build with not only women but male dermatologists. In fact, other organizations have modeled their mentoring and leadership programs after WDS. WDS has found and preserved its organizational niche.

Supporting Our Own

The WDS is to be applauded for the recognition of its own members. In the evolutionary years of the Society, the women leaders began to recognize the achievements of women dermatologists. These include: the President's recognition of special members for their efforts; the Rose Hirschler award for significant contributions to dermatology; the Wilma F Bergfeld MD Leadership Award for demonstration of professional leadership; the recognition of benefactors for their special support of educational and mentoring activities and, lastly, recognition for public education and safety, community outreach, initiatives.



It has only been in the last 13 years that the American Academy of Dermatology elected its first female president. Wilma Bergfeld, M.D., was the first, and she assumed the role of President of the Academy in 1992. Since then, the Academy has elected two other women presidents — Lynn Drake, M.D., in 1998, and Boni Elewski, M.D., in 2004.

Keeping in Contact — Professionally and Personally

The WDS newsletter and Web site have been important communication vehicles. They have highlighted the WDS events, programs, future activities, membership achievements and more. In addition, the newsletter also highlights personal items such as members' personal stories, "A Woman's Journal," and the preferred reading non-medical book list "WDS Reads and Recommends."

The WDS has kept its personal touch while moving forward as a professional organization.

Continuing the Momentum

In reflection, the WDS had a slow start because it was thought to be a rebel organization, and we had to overcome this by developing our purpose and direction.

Looking back, it certainly has been an adventure in leadership and challenged us to learn to balance our professional lives with our families.

With patience, preparation and planning, the WDS has had many successes in leadership, academia, mentoring, networking educational programs and, most recently, the community outreach LPGA Golf Sun Safety Initiative.

I know that the WDS will continue to nurture women and provide an environment that promotes friendship and success. I am glad to be a woman dermatologist and to have had an instrumental part in establishing this wonderful Society. I'm especially rewarded by the individual successes of the women in dermatology and the women leaders who have been born of the Society.

There is no doubt in my mind that the success and impact of the Women's Dermatology Society is a result of its dedicated members and leaders. Thank you for being a part of my vision. I know that the Society will continue to thrive, and I look forward to following its continued achievements.

Dr. Bergfeld is the Head of Clinical Research in the Department of Dermatology and the Head of the Section of Dermatopathology at The Cleveland Clinic Foundation in Cleveland, OH.



President's Message: The WDS Today

The WDS has broadened its scope
to include an array of networking and mentoring opportunities.

By Sandra I. Read, M.D.



Sandra I. Read, M.D.

The WDS today is a dynamic and growing society which owes its successes of the first 30 years to the visionary leadership and fulfillment of its significant mission.

The guiding mission statements of the organization, which include the professional and personal growth of its membership, the training, identification and recognition of women leaders, the development of a forum for relationship building, and support for women's issues in dermatology, continue to be pursued by the Society's membership. From these foundations, the WDS finds itself today in an exciting time.

monetary awards have totaled more than \$445,000. Mentorship opportunities have been extended to physicians in mid-career, medical students in training, and international colleagues.

The fulfillment of the charge within the mission statement of, "To provide a forum for developing relationships" has been perhaps the most successful achievement for WDS members. Opportunities for professional and personal contacts, friend-

ship, and interactions are a particularly enjoyable aspect of WDS membership. Enduring friendships within the society are common. The wide range of WDS networking activities occur in a variety of venues. National, international, regional, local, and individual gatherings frequently occur.

Who We Are Today

Today, the Society can proudly claim more than 1,100 members who include men, younger doctors, international members, and industry partners who have joined and are actively engaged in WDS activities.

Leadership participation within the Society has also evolved. Today's WDS leaders represent a broad spectrum of backgrounds and interest. Men and women, academics, practitioners, researchers, members of industry, and dermatologists in all stages of their professional careers are in leadership positions.

The mentorship program of the WDS is a well recognized and highly sought after scholarship program for professional development and growth for dermatology residents.

The mentorship program received the AAD's Award for Excellence in Education in 2000. The program has been granting scholarships for longer than 10 years. Mentorship awards have been granted to more than 223 recipients, and

Celebrating Together

For 30 years we've held our annual luncheon, and this year's event will be held during the AAD meeting in New Orleans where we're expected to have more than 700 guests. The luncheon will feature a business meeting, an awards ceremony and recognition of contributions by members. The luncheon provides an excellent opportunity to meet new colleagues and see old friends.

The growth of international networking has been another success. At the recent EADV meeting in Florence, more than 125 guests gathered, networked, toasted and tasted regional Tuscan wines. Joint networking with other societies, such as

the American Society for Dermatologic Surgery at the recent annual meeting in San Diego, has been another opportunity for contacts with our colleagues. Additionally, networking occurs in private homes across the country, allowing wonderful personal opportunities for associations.

Members' retreats occur on a regular basis and offer prolonged opportunities for interactions. These are most rewarding and relaxing associations that foster personal as well as professional growth. Attendance at the recent members' retreat in Toronto was terrific; one-third of our attendees were residents in training.

Leadership opportunities within the WDS are multifold. Leadership training within a smaller organization, such as the WDS, is personal and especially rewarding. Support for leadership opportunities outside the organization is also a key element of WDS membership. The past women presidents of the AAD have also been past president's of the WDS.

Increasing Opportunities for Interaction with Peers

To foster communication, the WDS has produced a Website, which a few months ago registered 135,000 visits. The Website is comprised of members' only benefits and information of interest to our local and national communities. Our longstanding newsletter is eagerly read by colleagues for information as to past and future events, members' news, book club recommendations, and other surprises.

The WDS also enjoys partnering and associating with other organizations. We've received much support from the AAD for our skin cancer screenings. In addition, the WDS has enjoyed partnering with the Dermatology Nurses Association and the Oncology Nurses for our skin cancer screenings. Industry partners have also been supportive by providing staffing support, financial support and products.

We also have a deeper relationship with the AAD, and we participate in the AAD initiative of Unity in Community, which allows our Society to participate more closely with the larger AAD organization. Adding to our increased activities within the AAD, the WDS, as well as other societies, will have a presence at the AAD by having a symposium opportunity.

Numerous Opportunities to Come

Today's successes support tomorrow's opportunities. The WDS continues to explore programs to expand its scope. Service and volunteer activities are a natural interest for professional societies, as they are an important aspect of all doctors' lives. In 2004, the WDS conducted four skin cancer screenings at the LPGA tournaments. Women golfers were targeted because of data that showed a high level of skin cancers in this professional group of athletes. The WDS membership responded rapidly to the call for volunteerism, and successful screenings were conducted.

Additionally, The WDS is exploring additional service opportunities for Society members. Within the WDS opportunities are being developed to creatively allow more participation by our membership.

Also new to the WDS is the establishment of the WDS Foundation. The Foundation will allow making contributions to an organization that has sustained it and will insure its future for all members.

A Can-Do Organization

An important component of what the WDS is today relates to the size of the organization and the responsiveness of its members. The easy accessibility of our members allows for rapid responses to new activities. The WDS can quickly mobilize and institute its new programs effectively. This truly is a can-do Society where "yes" is the common response.

“The WDS will celebrate its 30th anniversary luncheon during the AAD meeting in New Orleans this February.”

Additionally, I would emphasize that what the Society does best, for all of its members, no matter where you are in your career path, is offer the opportunity to make enduring friendships which will last all of your life.

It has been my pleasure and honor to have served as your President for the past year. This Society has provided me with an opportunity to serve in a cause in which I believe. I would ask each of you to reflect on the past achievements of this WDS, and realize the future benefits to you. I encourage each of you to get involved, for the fun of it!

Dr. Read, the current President of the WDS, is a Clinical Instructor in the Department of Dermatology at Georgetown University in Washington, DC.



The History of Women in Dermatology: Exploring a Rich Legacy that Continues to Evolve

The Women's Dermatologic Society and its supporters have played a pivotal role in advancing the careers of women in the field.

It might seem a bit odd that no one in the Women's Dermatologic Society, including its founding members, is quite certain when the organization was officially established. Yet that minor mystery — the best guess is that the WDS started sometime between 1975 and 1977 — has had no effect on the major role that the organization has played in advancing the profile of women in the field of dermatology.

How It All Began

The women who would one day found the WDS began meeting informally in the early 1970s, in a large suite in the Palmer House in Chicago, where the annual Academy meetings were then held. The suite belonged to Minerva Buerk, MD, an early pioneer in the field who graduated from the Women's Medical College in 1946. Her sister Ruby Sears, daughter-in-law of the Sears Roebuck founder, made the venue available to Dr. Buerk and her female colleagues.

Dr. Buerk, then president of the American Medical Women's Association, had been approached by two young women dermatologists who asked for help in meeting other women in the field. She posted a note on the AAD meeting bulletin board announcing "Buffet Luncheon, Women Dermatologists" with the date, time and suite number. Over the ensuing four years, what began as an intimate gathering grew steadily larger in number. When the

group had "outgrown" the suite, Dr. Buerk and several other leading women dermatologists changed the luncheon venue and began organizing more formal gatherings.

The Fledgling Group Takes Flight

From that fledgling group of a few dozen women who gathered for lunch during the annual Academy meeting for the primary purpose of connecting with their then few female colleagues, the WDS today counts nearly 1,200 women dermatologists and an ever-increasing number of men among its membership.

Ironically, one individual who figured in the genesis of the WDS as a formal organization was not even a woman — Walter Shelley, M.D., whose wife E. Dorinda Shelley, M.D., a long-time member of the Medical College of Ohio faculty, would later become the WDS's president.

Dr. Walter Shelley, who served as Academy president in 1972, was trying to identify women to assume leadership roles in the AAD, to little avail.

"He was frustrated that he couldn't find any women to serve on the committees, and he asked for my help," Dr. Dorinda

During a few of those early WDS meetings there were dissenters — who thought it wasn't necessary for the women to get together. They were terrified that the men would turn against us. They tried to soft-pedal it as a social organization, but it really wasn't that at all. It was a way for the few women to meet because none of us knew each other. Nowadays, of course, that sounds so funny.

E. Dorinda Shelley, MD, past WDS president

Shelley says. "He knew that our group had already been meeting informally for some time, and suggested that we start nominating women to serve on the committees. So in some ways Walter was one of the prime movers behind the start of the organization."

Dr. Walter Shelley was among several male dermatologists who not only fostered the WDS's development but also promoted the position of women in the field in general. Richard Odom, M.D., winner of last year's WDS Rose Hirschler Award (established in honor of the first known U.S. woman dermatologist) — Peyton Weary, M.D., Richard Scher, M.D., and Edgar Ben Smith, M.D., among others, have played instrumental roles in the WDS as board members and mentors.

Including Men Early in the Society's Ranks

The WDS early on decided to include men in its membership and on its board, notes former Academy and WDS president Lynn Drake, M.D., a lecturer at Harvard Medical School.

"The men in dermatology have for the most part been very open to and welcoming of women, and we decided in the early 1980s that we needed to choose men who had been supportive of women — and put them on our board," Dr. Drake recalls, and to create a category for male members. "It was very important because the WDS was for the promotion of women, and we knew then that we needed the help of men who were in leading power positions."

She thinks that the paucity of women in Academy leadership positions at the time had less to do with any actual or even perceived bias than with the fact that women simply hadn't stepped up to the plate yet. The WDS provided a vehicle to nominate qualified women for those positions, Dr. Drake notes.

In the early 1980s about 14% of dues-paying AAD members were women, but women remained seriously underrepresented in the Academy leadership, Dr. Drake recalls. The WDS helped to change that.

"It wasn't because of any effort by the men to exclude the women — it was just that they didn't know us. The WDS gave us an organization by which we could nominate women for [Academy] positions," Dr. Drake says. Nor was it that women weren't qualified.

"It was very hard for a woman not to be qualified in those days because it was so difficult then for women to get into medical school and dermatology that basically everybody was qualified," she says.

The first woman nominated for an Academy position was

WDS Milestones & Memories

- 1970** Informal "teas" and luncheons for women dermatologists are hosted by pioneer Minerva Buerk, MD, at the Palmer House in Chicago, during the AAD meeting
- 1973** First formal luncheon for women dermatologists held in concert with the AAD meeting
- 1976** Women's "caucus" of approximately 40 dermatologists and members begins movement toward establishing a formal organization
- 1978** Wilma Bergfeld, MD, become first official WDS president
- 1980** Elizabeth Morgan, MD, author of the best-selling book "The Making of a Woman Surgeon," is keynote speaker at the WDS luncheon
- 1986** WDS membership moves toward 200
- 1990** WDS ratifies its first official bylaws and incorporates in Illinois, as membership approaches 500.
- 1991** Mentorship Grant Program established
- 1994** WDS annual leadership career development workshop begins
- 2004** Membership tops the 1,000 mark and at year-end totals 1,170

When Walter Shelley asked me to 'organize the women,' we already had a number of distinguished and well recognized women members of the AAD: there were professors, researchers, editors and at least one woman member of the Board of Directors. He felt that women were not being nominated for positions within the AAD because the networking method of finding men candidates didn't work for women ... So I told him that I would.

Miriam Reed, MD, WDS founding member, in a 1991 letter to Frances Storrs, MD, who started the WDS mentorship program

WOMEN IN DERMATOLOGY: COMING INTO THEIR OWN

WDS's first president and the 1991 AAD president Wilma Bergfeld, M.D. The nomination of the accomplished Cleveland Clinic dermatopathologist, who would later become a chief Food and Drug Administration consultant, moved forward with barely a blink of the eye, Dr. Drake says. "All we had to do was nominate her!"



Not long after the male membership category was created, the applications began trickling in. The first brave applicant was then resident Daniel Siegal, M.D., who is now on the faculty at SUNY-Stony Brook.

When Dr. Drake asked him why he had applied, he simply responded, "I think it's an interesting group," she says. Edgar Ben Smith, M.D., the first board-certified male dermatologist to apply for WDS membership, provided a more personal response to the question.

"He said, 'It's very simple, Lynn. I have three daughters,'" Dr. Drake quips.

Propelling Women to Many Leadership Roles

The San Francisco-based WDS, whose logo is a stylized rose that has become a recognizable symbol of women in the field, has come a long way indeed since those early days.

The WDS has been largely responsible for propelling women dermatologists into leadership positions within the

Academy, the American Medical Association and other organizations, and its mentorship program, considered by many in the field to be among the best in operation today, has helped scores of dermatology residents chart their future career paths.

Among the WDS's most notable achievements, however, may be of the unquantifiable variety, suggests Gloria Graham, M.D., who served as WDS president in 1997-'98 and has been in practice for nearly four decades.

"I would say that the WDS has probably been of greater value to us in a personal sense — as a way and a place to talk about the issues that affect women in particular — because the professional framework for things is already there," Dr. Graham says.

"It's always been fun, and there are a lot of organizations in medicine that are anything but fun. In the WDS you're

going to learn something, you will be able to share, and on a larger scale, to network."

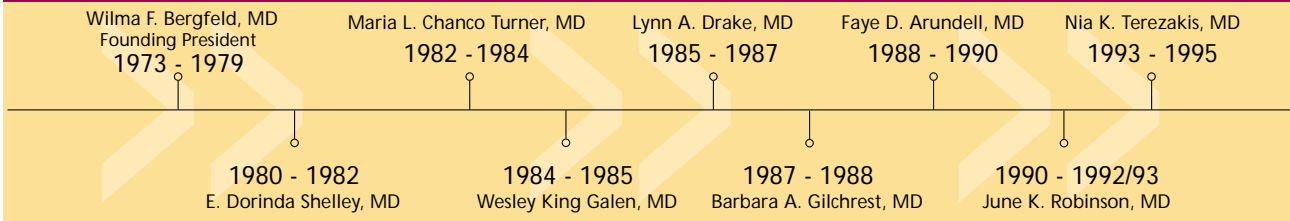
“What is important is that this [WDS] is not a feminist group; it's a supportive networking group to teach our skills to mentor others — men and women. And that's the way it was for me, when Wilma Bergfeld, MD, became my mentor. There have been times in my career when I haven't known where to go, and Wilma has always been there to give me a guiding hand.”

Susan Weinkle, MD, past WDS president and current AAD board member

Why an Organization Just for Women?

Dr. Graham remembers distinctly the time, about a decade ago, that a few women dermatologists at a WDS luncheon questioned the need for an organization composed only of women — and in fact thought that it might be detrimental to

WDS Leadership Through the Years — Past Presidents



furthering women in the field. Their reasons were understandable. The women's movement was essentially behind them, and most women in medicine who had struggled to gain something akin to par with their male colleagues didn't want to be perceived as having some sort of "secret club" or, worse, as being overtly exclusive in the way that men had once been.

Later, when a few longtime WDS members were discussing the situation and trying to decide how to address the dissenters' well-articulated objections, a young resident at the adjacent table approached them.

"She said to us, 'I just couldn't help overhearing you. My thoughts about this — and I'm not even a member yet — is that if you didn't have this organization, you would have to start it,'" Dr. Graham recalls.

"That made us all take a good look at WDS, and I think that young woman will never know the impression she made on us, as the leaders of the organization at that time."

Susan Weinkle, M.D., of Bradenton, FL, a longtime member and current Academy board member, echoes Dr. Graham's sentiments about the importance of the WDS.

"Women, in whatever profession they're in, have different strengths and different things to deal with than our male colleagues, and organizations like the WDS provide an opportunity to share that," Dr. Weinkle, a Mohs surgeon in private



The [WDS] has been a particularly strong force in punctuating the presence and prowess of women in American dermatology. There is no question in my mind that its presence has had a great deal to do with the inclusion of women in so many positions of influence, both politically and in education. We've come a long way from the 70s ...

Frances Storrs, MD, in a 1994 letter to Stephanie Pincus, MD.

practice. "I don't care if every dermatologist in the country is a woman — we still need to have a venue to interact, a time to get together and to support each other, a way to help network with and train women in leadership."

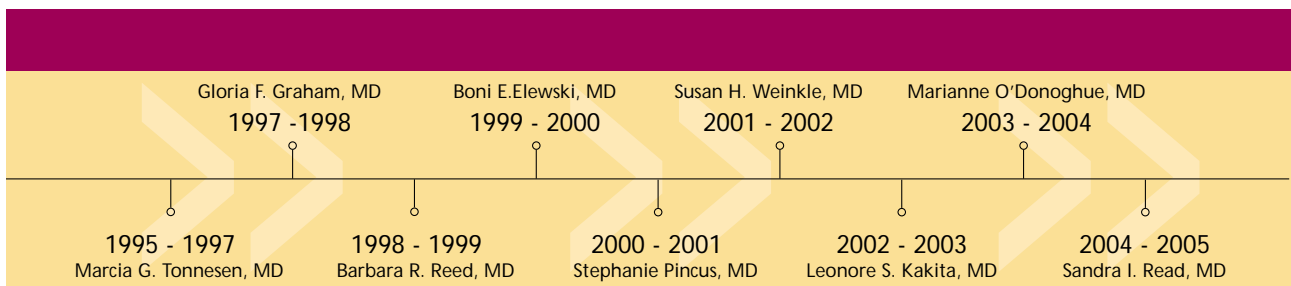
That's precisely what Jodi Eisner, M.D., a final-year resident at the University of Virginia in Charlottesville, expects to gain through her membership in the WDS.

Dr. Eisner, who attended the WDS annual retreat in Toronto last year, sees the organization as a way to both create a network and tap the experience of veteran women dermatologists — whether they're in academia or private practice.

A Group with Lasting Value from Residency and Beyond

"The WDS definitely serves that bridge — between residency and practice — very nicely," says Dr. Eisner.

"When you're in medical school and training you have your 'group,' but then all of a sudden you're done. You hope you will join a good private practice or find a good position in academics, but you don't really know what will happen when you 'get out in the world.' I think WDS will become even more valuable to me because I'll be able to relate to these women on a different level as I make my transition."





Mentors Make a Difference

For more than a decade, the WDS Mentorship Grant Program has provided life-changing experiences for participants and their mentors.

Ask any successful dermatologist how she “got where she is today” and her answer is likely to be something along these lines: “a lot of hard work and many good mentors — women and men.” These days, many women dermatologists are likely to append that response with a mention of the mentorship program offered through the Women’s Dermatologic Society, which in just over a decade has emerged as one of the best in the field.

One of the Crown Jewels of the Society

“The mentorship program we started is one of the best things we have ever done as an organization — and it works,” says Lynn Drake, M.D., a lecturer at Harvard Medical School and a past president of both the WDS and the American Academy of Dermatology. “It’s a nice way to integrate men and women, and I think the individuals who structured it were geniuses.”

One of the “geniuses” behind the WDS mentorship person surely is Frances Storrs, M.D., Professor Emerita of Dermatology at Oregon Health & Science University in Portland, OR. Dr. Storrs asked the WDS to use her Rose Hirschler 1991 award of \$1,000 to start the program, in lieu of receiving the funds for her personal use. Having watched dozens of the program’s protégés, including those she has personally mentored, go on to pursue rewarding careers has convinced Dr. Storrs of the program’s value — for the organization and for her career satisfaction.

“I feel more proud of this than of anything I have done in medicine — it is a wonderful program that has since been heavily copied,” says Dr. Storrs, who will serve as mentor to two WDS grant awardees this year.

Unlike many mentorship programs, the WDS program enables protégés to choose their mentors and design the mentorship experience — whether it is a structured research project or primarily an opportunity to “job shadow” a leader

in the field whose work interests them (see sidebar, pg. 14).

That’s exactly what led Alexa Boer Kimball, M.D., M.P.H., to the WDS mentorship program in 1997. Dr. Kimball, who now directs the dermatology joint

clinical trials unit at Massachusetts General and Brigham & Women’s hospitals, recalls the experience that ended up being career-changing. While watching a presentation at the annual Academy meeting by NIH researcher Maria Turner, M.D., on dermatologic manifestations of chemotherapy, Dr. Kimball decided that she wanted to learn more about the issue firsthand. “I remember that I literally thought, ‘I need to go work with her,’” Dr. Kimball recalls. The WDS program enabled her to do just that.

That mentorship experience not only shaped Dr. Kimball’s career, it also spawned an NIH fellowship program in clinical trials that she designed for herself while working with Dr. Turner. “Clearly, the WDS mentorship program had a huge impact on my career, because I knew what I was interested in but just hadn’t quite met the right people to make it happen,” she says. “It was the perfect fit for me, and that fellowship program is on its fourth fellow now.”

Six years later, Dr. Kimball became the mentor, to then University of Wisconsin resident Tiffany Rebella, M.D., who sought Dr. Kimball’s clinical trials expertise for participating in trials in the private practice setting. “It was great fun to have my career mature enough to return the favor,” Dr. Kimball says. “She came with the specific purpose of learning those skills. That’s one of the program’s strengths—it’s very flexible in who you can work with and how you choose your mentor.”

Broadening Your Learning Horizons

Suzanne Granados Spadafora, M.D., became involved in the mentorship program in part to broaden her horizons. While completing her residency at the University of Massachusetts in 2003, she worked with Sam Hwang, M.D., Ph.D., at the NIH, participating in the research he was doing on dermatologic issues in T-cell lymphoma and doing consults on patients. "Basically, after 3 years of residency and reading about all of those rare diseases and the gene tests that people can get, that mentorship experience was actually the culmination of everything for me," says Dr. Granados, who is now in private practice in Richmond, Va. "It was such a great learning experience that I have been encouraging other residents to look into the WDS mentorship program. It gives you ties to people in other organizations that you wouldn't have had otherwise."

Many of the WDS' longtime members and current or former leaders have carved out the time in their busy careers to serve as mentors, both through the WDS program and in less formal settings. What they find, perhaps not unexpectedly, is that the learning experience usually goes both ways. Amy Paller, M.D., chair of dermatology and professor of pediatrics at Northwestern University, might qualify as a "super mentor." In addition to working with more than a dozen mentees through the WDS, Dr. Paller has mentored high school students, medical students, residents and more than 20 fellows who have come through Children's Memorial Hospital. And all have taught her something and enriched her life, she says.

"My mentoring relationships have always been continuing learning experiences for me," Dr. Paller says. "I count myself very blessed that I have had many mentors along the way who have made such a difference in my career. So it gives me a tremendous amount of joy to discover that I have had an influence on someone else." Several of those mentees credit Dr. Paller for their choice of medicine, or dermatology specifically, as a career. Other mentees, physicians who were in residency or already working in the field, have told Dr. Paller that their experiences with her have helped them narrow their career focus or even change their path. "It's all been very personally rewarding — and what's amazing is that I have been able to stay in touch with most of those people and watch their careers develop," she says.

The Importance of Personal Development

Structured mentorship programs and the opportunity to watch experts in action and obtain a sense of "how they tick" surely play an important role in young dermatologists' pro-



Frances Storrs, M.D.: The 'Grand Dame' of the WDS Mentorship Program

One can hardly mention the WDS mentorship program without uttering the name of Frances J. Storrs, MD, in the same breath. Dr. Storrs, a longtime faculty member at Oregon Health and Science University in Portland, was the inspiration for the WDS mentorship program, which has funded nearly 200 women and men since its founding.

In honor of her four-decade commitment to the fine art of mentorship, the WDS in 2003 awarded its first "Mentor of the Year" designation to Dr. Storrs. A 1991 recipient of the WDS' Rose Hirschler Award, created in honor of the woman who was the first known female U.S. dermatologist, Dr. Storrs used the honorarium she received to establish the organization's mentorship program.

fessional development. But the personal development that often comes hand in hand may be just as important sometimes, especially for women in the field. "I think it is really critical that there are female mentors who have been able to be professional women and yet have a good marriage and raise children who turn out o.k.," says Dr. Paller, who has three teenage sons. "Those are things that women dermatologists are understandably concerned about, so it's important that they spend time with someone who has been able to juggle career and family successfully.

Dr. Paller views mentorship as an important career component for both mentors and mentees, and urges colleagues to "heed the call" when they are asked to serve as mentors. At the

same time, she cautions that mentors should be prepared to spend the requisite time to explore their mentees' professional interests and give them a real picture of the mentor's work life.

"You have to remember that people are there with you not because they want to sit around and chat — they want to see you in action. The best mentors are the ones who take the time to listen to what the individual's interest is, and then help them explore that," she says.

A Program with "Lasting Good"

Gloria Graham, M.D., a founding member of WDS who was president when the mentorship program was established and

served on the faculty of Wake Forest University in North Carolina for many years, views the WDS program as one of the organization's supreme achievements—and an undertaking that also has helped propel women into leadership positions in the field.

"I really think that of all the things we have done in a formal sense, the mentorship program has done the most lasting good," says Dr. Graham, who, at nearly 70, recently started a new private practice on the North Carolina coast. "It has changed more lives, has helped more people select an appropriate career or path in our specialty, and it has been a great joy to those who have been mentors."

The WDS Mentorship Program: How It Works

Initially established in 1990, the Women's Dermatologic Society Mentorship Grant Program enables dermatology residents and young physicians to tap the expertise of dermatologists whose research or career path interests them or to pursue special projects under the guidance of practicing dermatologists and researchers. Each year, more than 40 young physicians participate in the award program, whose mission is to both promote mentorship within the WDS and to enable protégés to work on projects specifically designed to support their own career development. The program's overall goal is to establish long-term relationships between mentors and their "mentees" and, ultimately, to cultivate the spirit of knowledge sharing that furthers the field as a whole.

Funded through a generous grant from Dermik, the mentorship program is flexibly designed to enable participants to pursue a wide range of projects and experiences, from topic- or disorder-specific rotations with leading clinicians, to leadership training opportunities, to focused, short-term research projects for which funding from traditional sources might not be available. Most mentorship opportunities are two to four weeks in duration, but may be longer or shorter depending on the project.

Requirements and Application Process

Although all program applicants must be members of the WDS or in the process of applying for membership, both men and women can participate — as either mentors or protégés. The only stipulations are that either the mentor or protégé be a woman and that the protégé attend the annual WDS luncheon to receive the award.

Dermatology residents interested in applying for the award must first choose a mentor and ask for a commitment to an agreed-upon project and time period. Applicants must also obtain a letter of support from their department chair and make arrangements for the time away from their program. Completed applications, available online at <http://womensderm.org>, must be submitted to WDS by Nov. 1 for mentorship projects and experiences that will be undertaken during the following calendar year.

Closing Pearls

How Times Have Changed

"The first Academy meeting I attended was in 1967, when I was a first-year resident. I was in a nearly new program and the professors strongly believed we needed the educational experience, so they closed everything down and we all went to Chicago. One of my most vivid memories was of trying to get on an elevator after a session ended. There was a mad 'squash' to get into the elevator, and I was the only woman who got on — it was just packed with men."

E. Dorinda Shelley, MD

WDS' and women dermatologists' influence on the field

"One of the key achievements of WDS and women in our specialty is that as the surgical and cosmetic aspects of dermatology evolve, we have identified women leaders in those areas who have been supportive and enabled younger women to train with them."

Susan Weinkle, MD

Opportunities abound for women entering 'derm'

"In academia, the number of women in top positions is still puny, but academic dermatology is wide open now for women — it's understaffed as a whole and we really need more teachers of dermatology. We have such a manpower shortage in our field right now that any young woman can pretty much write her own ticket — she will find open arms, and lots of mentoring and acceptance, no matter which way she wants to go."

Lynn A. Drake, MD

WDS' importance, even in a more "enlightened" age

"What's so unique about this organization is the informal mentoring that goes on. When you're in residency you're only exposed to academic medicine, and Women's Derm spans both academics and private practice. For someone coming through the ranks it's really valuable to be able to shoot ideas off of both sides — for example, if someone is in academics and has three children and does research, how does she manage that? Or if she's in private practice and works part-time, how do you make that work?"

Jodi Eisner Ganz, MD

University of Virginia resident

To become part of the Women's Dermatologic Society — just contact us!

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