



NIH **U**pdates on Women in Science News for Yo**U** 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.

Contents of this Issue

[*Accelerator Intervention Promotes Awareness of Family Friendly Policies*](#)

[*Gender Bias Revealed Among Communication Researchers*](#)

[*New Report on Women in Community Colleges*](#)

[*The Women of Color Research Network Launches New Blog Feature*](#)

[*Causal Factors and Interventions Workshop Report Now Available*](#)

[*Women Scientists in Action— Goli Samimi, Ph.D., M.P.H.*](#)

Accelerator Intervention Promotes Awareness of Family Friendly Policies

In a recently published NIH-supported study, researchers at the University of California (UC), Davis, School of Medicine designed and tested an intervention to increase awareness and promote use of existing family friendly policies. While flexible workplace policies can be key for working parents struggling to achieve balance, a previous publication from

these same authors suggests that faculty members rarely take advantage of these policies. In this study, the authors used a communications campaign to promote awareness of flexible policies and knock down barriers to their use. The campaign, including social and conventional media, presentations, and faculty liaisons, was targeted to faculty in the School of Medicine. Faculty members in the School of Veterinary Medicine and the College of Biological Sciences were used as a control group, as they have access to the same policies but received no intervention. The authors used an annual “Work, Family, and Satisfaction” survey to assess awareness of existing policies, perceived barriers to policy use, and degree of career satisfaction in faculty from each school before and after one year of intervention. While the authors found increased awareness of flexible policies over time in all three schools, the biggest improvement occurred in the School of Medicine, where the intervention occurred. Faculty members there reported feeling more comfortable with family friendly policies and identified fewer barriers to use. The intervention was most effective among women and among faculty members 41-50 years old. In follow-up studies, the authors plan to investigate whether increased awareness leads to increased usage of the policies and whether career satisfaction, recruitment, and retention also improve.

[Improving Knowledge, Awareness, and Use of Flexible Career Policies through an Accelerator Intervention at the University of California, Davis, School of Medicine](#)

Gender Bias Revealed Among Communication Researchers

Researchers from Ohio State University surveyed 243 graduate students in the field of communication, in order to investigate whether a scientist’s gender influences how others perceive his or her work, and whether the degree of bias varies according to research topic. Students participating in this online study reviewed abstracts from the International Communication Association’s 2010 conference, with the names and number of authors manipulated on select abstracts. Students were asked to rate the scientific quality of the abstracts and to indicate their interest in collaborating with the authors. At the same time, students completed a questionnaire designed to gauge their attitudes towards gender roles. Overall, students rated abstracts from male authors to be of higher quality, with the highest scores assigned to male authors working in communication fields typically dominated by men, such as political communication or communication technology. These same abstracts received lower scores when they were attributed to female authors. Students reported more interest in collaborating with male authors working in male-dominated fields, and more interest in working with female authors in fields that are stereotypically female-dominated, such as communication related to parenting or body image. Male and female students exhibited the same biases, but respondents expressing stronger inclinations towards gender equality gave higher ratings to abstracts written by female authors.

[The Matilda Effect in Science Communication: An Experiment in Gender Bias in Publication Quality Perceptions and Collaboration Interest](#)

New Report on Women in Community Colleges

A recent report from the American Association of University Women describes challenges for women in community colleges. According to the report, more than 4 million women in the United States attend community colleges, making up 57% of their student body. The report presents data, outlines challenges, and makes recommendations to better support women in community colleges, focusing on two major areas: Parenting issues and women in STEM. According to the report, there are over one million mothers enrolled in community colleges, but few colleges offer child care

resources. Recommendations include assessing the demand for child care, developing child care referral services, and applying for grants that help schools fund on-campus child care centers. Examining the under-representation of women in the STEM fields (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics), the authors note the importance of STEM in our modern economy. Women in community colleges are more likely to major in traditionally female fields, such as nursing and cosmetology, rather than preparing to enter STEM occupations. The authors outline this problem and offer recommendations, including improving access mentors and role models, facilitating transfer to four-year colleges, and providing extra support for students navigating STEM curricula.

[Women in Community Colleges: Access to Success](#)

The Women of Color Research Network Launches New Blog Feature

The Women of Color Research Network (WoCRn) recently launched a new Spectrum Blog, in order to share information on the NIH, grantsmanship, the funding process, and research opportunities. The first blog post, “NIH 101: Who We Are, How We Work, and What It All Means for You,” covers basic information that all researchers should know about the NIH. The next two posts delve deeper into the grants process to describe how to get started on your grant application and to explain what happens to grants once they reach the NIH. More posts are in the works! To access the Spectrum, visit www.wocrn.nih.gov and scroll over to the forums section. While you’re there, think about joining the network! WoCRn is a social media site for women of color and all supporters of diversity in the scientific workforce. Created in 2011 by the Women of Color in Biomedical Careers Committee of the NIH Working Group on Women in Biomedical Careers, WoCRn serves a resource to create community, provide information, and facilitate access to mentors and role models. There are currently over 860 members, and membership is open to everybody in the scientific community – high school students, graduate students, fellows, independent investigators, and scientists working on and off the bench. If you have topics you’d like to see covered in the blog, contact Kate Nagy at nagyk@mail.nih.gov.

[The Women of Color Research Network](#)

Causal Factors and Interventions Workshop Report Now Available

In November 2012, the NIH Working Group on Women in Biomedical Careers, the National Institute of General Medical Sciences, and the Office of Research on Women’s Health (ORWH) convened a workshop for the 14 research teams who received grants through RFA-GM-09-012: Research on Causal Factors and Interventions that Promote and Support the Careers of Women in Biomedical and Behavioral Science and Engineering. During this two-day workshop, grantees presented their research findings, engaged in lively discussions, and brainstormed on next steps to support women scientists and clinicians. The grantees were joined by keynote speaker Dr. Shirley Malcom, Head of the Directorate for Education and Human Resources Programs of the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS), and Dr. Hannah Valantine, Senior Associate Dean for Diversity and Leadership at the Stanford University School of Medicine. The discussions covered such themes as framing gender equity as a scientific problem, transferring knowledge of disparities into useful interventions, the importance of cultural change, and how work-life balance policies contribute to a healthy climate. A workshop report, containing summaries of each presentation and outlining key discussion points, is now available on the website of the NIH Working Group on Women in Biomedical Careers.

[NIH Working Group on Women in Biomedical Careers](#)

Women Scientists in Action— Goli Samimi, Ph.D., M.P.H.

Goli Samimi is Group Leader of the Ovarian Cancer Research Group at the Kinghorn Cancer Centre and Garvan Institute of Medical Research in Sydney, Australia. She grew up in Los Angeles, CA, and stayed local to do her undergraduate work at the University of California, Los Angeles and earn her doctorate from the University of California, San Diego. After completing her Ph.D., Dr. Samimi did a short postdoctoral fellowship at the Rebecca and John Moores UCSD Cancer Center, and then became a Cancer Prevention Fellow at the NIH. As part of the fellowship, she completed a Masters in Public Health degree from the Harvard School of Public Health, and then did postdoctoral research at the National Cancer Institute. While at NIH, Dr Samimi was honored with a merit award from the Cancer Prevention Fellowship Program, and twice received the Fellows Award for Research Excellence, co-sponsored by the NIH Office of Research on Women's Health, the NIH Fellows Committee, the Scientific Directors, and the Office of Intramural Training and Education.

In 2009, Dr. Samimi was granted an NIH K99/R00 Pathways to Independence Award to characterize stromal-epithelial interactions in ovarian cancer. This was a pivotal moment in Dr. Samimi's career, as the award supports the transition between postdoctoral research and a stable independent position. Her research group at the Kinghorn Cancer Centre/Garvan Institute focuses on the identification of novel therapeutic targets and using DNA methylation in plasma DNA as a biomarker for early stage ovarian cancer. Her ultimate goal is to develop a non-invasive early detection test for ovarian cancer in high-risk women. While she originally started studying ovarian cancer because it's a fascinating model for understanding chemotherapy resistance, she now finds that interacting with the public is one of the most rewarding aspects of her job. She says, "I really enjoy writing and speaking about science. As part of my job, I get to educate the public on cancer research. I really enjoy answering their questions and hopefully making an impact."

In the two years since Dr. Samimi set up her research group, she has received numerous accolades. Most recently, she was named one of Australia's most inspiring women by Australia's Women's Health magazine. She is a member of multiple scientific societies, including the American Association for Cancer Research and the Australian Society for Medical Research, and has recently joined the PLOS One and Scientific Reports editorial boards.

Dr. Samimi raves about the excellent mentors she has had along her professional journey, especially her graduate advisor and thesis committee members. She still reflects on their advice, and tries to pass it along to her own students and fellows. She praises her current postdoctoral fellows for their talent and independence, and comments on how proud she is of having mentored a Ph.D. student who recently received his degree. She says, "It's a pretty incredible feeling to know that your supervision and expertise helped guide a student to complete an impressive thesis!"

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