I imagine that like me, everyone is eagerly anticipating the onset of spring. Spring is my favorite season for the warmth it brings after a long cold gray winter and for its symbolism of rebirth and reawakening. My spirit is always reinvigorated by longer days and the view of daffodils outside of my window. My daughter was born as the first of spring and daffodils (which I previously viewed as too yellow for my taste) were in bloom at my front door, as if heralding the arrival of Alice when I brought her home. Needless to say, they are now a favorite flower. At this time of year my thoughts and dreams are invigorated too. I begin planning my garden, checking seed catalogs for unusual and heirloom varieties, and impatiently waiting for my tulip bulbs to sprout. It is a fertile time for project ideas too, perhaps stimulated by just attending my annual subspecialty meeting. This year at the meeting, I had the pleasure of visiting with two of SWIU’s esteemed members, Drs. Nina Davis and Catherine Ru.de.Vries. After catching up, our conversation turned to our interest in advocating for urologic health in our communities and the power of local community efforts. Certainly the important work of IVU abroad captured our attention after Catherine’s presentation at our 2008 annual meeting. She tells me that the organization has performed mission work in underserved areas of the US recently as well. We spoke of admiration for our colleagues who have been recognized for their dedicated efforts in their communities such as former SWIU president, Dr. Janice Arnold, who has spent years advocating for men’s urologic health in her community.

Returning to Nashville from the inspiring meeting, I began to think more about our conversation. Perhaps lasting change is better effected from the bottom up, through local grass roots efforts. The healthcare activism of individuals is often powerful, and the power of a group effort applied locally, in many different communities, may be exponentially powerful. At the 2009 SWIU Annual Meeting (Sunday, April 26th), the SWIU Executive Board plans to present an educational initiative in line with a goal to improve urologic healthcare and our mission to promote women in urology. This plan could help galvanize our society toward what brings us all together in the first place, that is our commitment to improving the genitourinary health of patients. Ideally, this initiative would also spur more of our members to become actively involved in SWIU, help promote women urologists as leaders in their communities and SWIU as an organization pertinent to organized urology today. As we grow, we search to ask why we exist. Do we have something to offer our members and our field of urology? The executive board of SWIU believes that we have more to offer to you today than perhaps any other time in our society’s history. We look forward to revealing the important educational initiative and other exciting member opportunities to you at the annual meeting this year. Hope to see you there!

Who Influenced Me?
Jenelle Foote, MD

By: Tracy Cannon-Smith, MD

While I was a medical student at the University of Michigan, I had few mentors in urology. I really had no idea what type of program would suit me as a young woman in urology. I was not sure if a fellowship was in store for me or not. I had the typical questions that most students have at this stage. I guess I had even more concerns than the average applicant because I was going to be a woman in urology. I had questions like “Would I be able to be a busy urologist as a woman?”, “Is it hard to get a job as a woman urologist?”, “As a woman urologist, would I likely see only female patients?”

One of my first interviews was at the University of Colorado. One of the urologists on staff there suggested that I talk to Jenelle Foote, MD about being a woman urologist and perhaps to get advice about how to proceed. He passed my number to her, and she called me. Our first conversation lasted thirty minutes. I cannot tell you what this meant to me as...
a medical student. Her advice was invaluable and helped me narrow down which programs I was actually going to visit for an interview. She gave me suggestions on my interview and helped prepare me for some of the people I may meet on my interviews. She helped me focus on what was important when making my match list.

Dr. Foote continued to mentor me through my residency and helped me again make a decision on whether or not to pursue a fellowship. She also helped guide me to find a program to train for my fellowship, and then helped me find a job in Colorado when my fellowship was completed. She was a mentor through the entire process. Don’t get me wrong; I did not call her daily. We talked prior to any major decisions that I needed to make. I truly appreciated this and wanted to point it out for two reasons. First, I appreciate that she took the time to initiate contact with me as a medical student. Students probably don’t expect this; I know I didn’t. Now that I have gone through this, I have also mentored students through the process. Second, the phone call only began the relationship. She continued to be a mentor throughout my training. I would ask that all women in urology be open to being contacted by medical students to help guide them through the process. Also medical students and residents should not hesitate to call people ahead of them in their careers. Thanks Jenelle!

Message from the Past President

By: Elizabeth Wagner Bozeman, MD, FACS

It is with mixed feelings I sit down to write this article. We just had our spring Board meeting. As immediate past president I am in charge of presenting the nominating slate for next year’s officers at the AUA SWIU Annual Breakfast. This year, however, for the first time in many years, I will not be at the AUA. For those of you who read my ramblings in the newsletter while I was president, you may remember my urologist husband/partner had embarked on a program to get his executive MBA at Emory University. Nineteen months later, he is nearing graduation. The last colloquium is an international one, and spouses are invited, as long as we can pay our way. We will be traveling from Istanbul, Turkey to Barcelona, Spain, while most of you are enjoying Chicago. I am so excited for many reasons — the travel opportunity of course, seeing new places and cultures, meeting new people, but mostly getting my husband back!

Leaving Dallas, in the cab to the airport, it occurred to me my time on the SWIU Board had ended. We always encourage previous presidents to attend our meetings but they rarely do. They have only a role as an observer and of course cannot vote. For the past seven years, I have been extremely involved in SWIU. It is hard to let that go! The current and rising officers are wonderful, smart and dedicated, and if our resident members are any indication, the future of women in urology is great!

I remember my first SWIU breakfast, 25 years ago (how did I get so old?). I felt intimidated and hardly talked to anyone. Those of you who know me probably do not believe this, but it is true. Make an effort to attend the breakfast. Be aggressive about meeting and talking to people you do not know. We all come from different backgrounds and locations, but we share a love of urology and the special talent we as women bring to the field. Consider becoming involved. I have made awesome friends from across the country — women in private practice and academicians I am sure I would never have otherwise met. We make this plea often, but I implore you to become more involved. You don’t have to be an officer — maybe get on a committee or write an article for the newsletter. If you are interested please talk to one of the officers at the AUA.

Despite my traveling agenda I will be thinking of you, Sunday morning at the SWIU meeting, and wishing I were there. Enjoy your breakfast and I will definitely see you next year!

Web of Connections

By: Melissa Kaufman, MD

Several meaningful correspondences have recently transpired from your organization’s growing website, www.swiu.org. First, a sincere email was forwarded from a gentleman in search of a woman urologist to care for his wife. In their community, a small southern town, their primary care physician concluded they were as likely to encounter a woman urologist as they were to stumble upon an ivory-billed woodpecker. The family was counseled by the PCP that their only option was to see one of the male urologists in the area. Before explaining how SWIU is currently creating infrastructure to provide technology to assist such patients, I must digest and address the issue of the presence of women in urology in the consciousness of the primary physician. I direct your attention to a recent editorial that caught my attention entitled, “The Feminization of Medicine and Population Health.” (Phillips and Austin, 2009, JAMA 301 (8) 863-864) The authors show data on the specialty choices of contemporary female medical students, and they report that in several western nations, females are disproportionately represented among generalist physicians. In a fascinating twist, it is suggested that this predominance of women in primary care fields may eventually be associated with improved health outcomes. So instead of lamenting the fact that fewer women are choosing subspecialty training, particularly in surgical fields, we should explore the concepts advocated in this editorial and embrace the notion. With the goal of developing a productive framework for a urology interface with interested generalists, there are efforts underway within SWIU to redefine our interactions with and the education of our primary care colleagues. This initiative may provide one mechanism by which we can influence local healthcare and insure that primary practitioners have access to women urologists in or near their communities. We ultimately envision that such resources will be accessed in a web-based format and used by physicians and patients alike.

Now back to the story of our attentive husband, desperate to find a urologist with whom his wife would be comfortable. He went to a popular search engine on the web and found SWIU. Fortunately, we were able to assist him in locating several women within reasonable driving distance that could offer the care they desired. In the near future, patients will enjoy independent access to these same resources. As outlined in the former column, SWIU is now providing a “Find a Doctor” service on the website, where the patient can click on a map of the US states and generate a list of participating women urologists. Your name and location will appear along with contact information and a link to your practice website if you wish. I encourage you to participate by acknowledging the request on your dues statement and verify on the website the accuracy of the information posted. Additional information regarding your practice specialty can easily be amended if you simply contact us with your requests.

A second interesting exchange resulted from an email received via the SWIU website from a medical student at a university without a urology training program. She was developing a connection to the field, yet isolated from options to address her many queries concerning the possible roles of women in urology. Of course, I enthusiastically replied and after the requisite amount of telephone tag, we made contact. The virtual rush of emotions when she began ardently peppering me with questions was almost overwhelming because it took me back to a time, in the not too distant past, when I too discovered my passion for urology and established I was destined to pursue it as a career. Fortunately for me, one of the residents at my small state school was a remarkable woman from whom I could directly seek advice. I credit her, to this day, for my presence in urology. She looked me squarely in the eye and with great conviction let me know what a fabulous field urology was for women to pursue. There was never a glimmer of doubt in her voice as she rattled off the myriad opportunities and wonderful interactions she had with male and female patients alike. I wanted the medical student who found SWIU to experience that same enthusiasm that became so defining to my career. It is all too easy for us to get consumed by the intricacies of the business of medicine, the demands of academics, and the time away from those we cherish. But for a few brief minutes, I was joyfully transported back to medical school and was able to relive some of the purity inherent to the pursuit of a dream. I was reminded that the legacy left to me by the great women of prior generations, who boldly defied convention and entered urology, was now my gift, and obligation, to pass along. Particularly when considering the previously mentioned data revealing declining numbers of women medical students entering surgical fields, we have a duty to enlighten these women to their vital role in urology and inform them, and remind ourselves, that despite all the hours, toil, failures, and frustrations, the urology patients we have the opportunity to serve provide the ultimate gratification. Although the intimidating old network remains an insidious fixture in urology, women urologists are poised to double in number in the next few years and are thus continually gaining ground in leadership roles within the AUA. And hopefully, someday, when I am sitting in that enormous lecture hall at the annual meeting plenary session, I will have the opportunity to see on that giant monitor the curious medical student who just wanted to know if it was possible.
The Society of Women in Urology Events at the AUA 2009 Are Not Just for Women

By: Harriette Scarpero, MD, SWIU President

The Society of Women in Urology (SWIU) will host its 29th Annual Meeting, its 4th annual CME event, Women Leaders in Urology, and a networking reception at the 2009 AUA meeting in Chicago. The purpose of SWIU is to support the professional advancement of women urologists, to encourage public education regarding urologic issues and to promote urologic research. SWIU membership consists of women urologists (MD/DO) and women urologic researchers (PhD). Women in urologic training (residents and fellows) are given free membership during their years of training, and female students interested in urology as a career are always welcome at SWIU AUA events. In the spirit of our mission, the SWIU Women Leaders in Urology CME event and the networking reception that follows it are open to all AUA attendees who share SWIU interests, regardless of gender.

The SWIU AUA activities begin with the traditional early morning breakfast meeting on Sunday, April 26th, 2009 at 6:30 a.m. Highlights of the program will include an AUA update from AUA President, Dr. John M. Barry, a presentation of the annual SWIU/Society of Basic Urologic Research award, and our keynote lecture. The 2009 SWIU Annual Meeting lecture will address the evolution of urologic education: Simulation: The New Frontier of Surgical Education and will be delivered by Dr. Elspeth McDougall, professor of urology at the University of California, Irvine, director of the Astellas Surgical Education Center at UC, Irvine, associate dean of clinical sciences for UC, Irvine School of Medicine, director of research in medical education, and the first recipient of the AUA Teaching Award. In addition, the 2009 recipients of SWIU Travel Awards and the Elizabeth Pickett Research Awards will be honored, each giving a short description of their research. SWIU has been a leader in the mentoring of students and residents in urology with several longstanding programs and awards, and we look forward to the opportunity to promote the achievements of a new group of remarkable young women early in their urologic careers. The society’s business meeting will be held as well; therefore, all active voting members are asked to attend.

SWIU is very proud of its successful CME event entitled, “Women Leaders in Urology”, which is in its fourth year. At the 2009 AUA meeting, it will be held on Tuesday, April 28th from 5:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. Dr. Margaret Pearle, professor of urology and the Dr. Ralph C. Smith Distinguished Chair in Urologic Education at the University of Texas, Southwestern will serve as the lead and moderator for discussion among a panel of women urologist experts on “Challenging Cases in the Medical and Surgical Management of Urolithiasis”.

The SWIU Networking Reception follows the Women Leaders in Urology CME event from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. This social event is a great opportunity to enjoy some refreshments, visit with urology friends from around the country and abroad, as well as make new acquaintances. SWIU also bestows its annual Christina Manthos Mentoring Award to a man or woman who has demonstrated extraordinary mentoring skills in supporting the careers of women in urology. The SWIU AUA events have been growing yearly as more and more women enter and graduate from urology training. We hope that you too will mark your AUA calendar to attend these events.

Sunday, April 26, 2009
Annual Breakfast Meeting
Hyatt Regency McCormick, Regency Ballroom A, 2nd Floor
6:30 a.m. – 9:00 a.m.

6:30 a.m. Breakfast Buffet

6:45 a.m. Welcoming Remarks
Harriette M. Scarpero, MD
2008 – 2009 President
You have been one. You remember it all too vividly, or perhaps the nightmare is slowly fading into a golden memory. Why do you need to read about it?

This is one physician’s experience in the process of becoming a doctor, which starts when he is working towards a PhD in physics, and the book ends with his decision to apply for a fellowship. He is, at best, ambivalent about his career, at least in the start of the book. He examines his motivations for becoming a doctor, and this tale is at least partially a typical story of immigrant parents counseling their son to follow a well-trodden path to upward mobility in the United States. And the rest of the book focuses on the process of becoming a doctor.

Most of the story is about the initiation ritual of internship. He uses patient vignettes to talk about feelings of inadequacy, which likely plagued most people who have been through medical training, and yet it is part of the culture not to admit weakness. He details his burgeoning relationship with his future wife, and he shows how stressful it can be to a relationship to work long hours with the ongoing stress of life and death decisions. He had to take a medical leave during his internship, and he writes about the feelings of isolation and depression that came with the illness and the time away. He talks about the language of the hospital, and how there is a club of the initiated that you gradually join in training.

These vignettes not only address his own emotional response to the initiation ritual, but he uses them to bring up some of the problems with the system of American medicine as a whole. He particularly explores the dilemma in training, between working long hours, which compromises patient care because judgment can be affected, and the dangers of cross coverage, where an intern covering eighty patients on night float with a one sentence sign out about each may severely endanger patients because of a lack of knowledge about them as individuals. He discussed the inherent problem in training that the most qualified person should perform procedures, yet somehow a new generation of physicians has to be trained. He spends some times discussing concepts of futility and the ethics of care withdrawal. And the common refrain for these ruminations is his own lack of certainty that this is really his calling.

Anyone who has been through the process will relate to the feelings of elation and despair. Dr. Jauhar is an excellent writer. His book would be useful to students to understand the process and is certainly useful for mentors to examine what is good and bad about these rituals.

Elisabeth Pickett
Research Awards

By: Dolores J. Lamb, PhD

Elisabeth P. Pickett was the first female to complete a fellowship in urological oncology in 1955, following her training as a general surgeon. She became the first board certified female urologist. In 1995, the SWIU honored Dr. Pickett with a research scholarship in her name, which provides small research grants for basic or clinical urologic research for promising female trainees in urologic investigation. This year, each winner will present a short lecture on their research proposal at the SWIU Women Leaders in Urology Forum breakfast at the AUA annual meeting in Chicago, Illinois at the Hyatt Regency McCormick. We hope that you will join us in recognizing the accomplishments of these outstanding trainees.

1. Van Anh Thi Ginger, MD, PhD: Labia Minora – Not Just a Minor Skin Fold

Dr. Ginger received her BS in biochemistry and her BA in mathematics and biology from the University of Indiana. She then obtained a PhD in molecular biology from the University of Cambridge in Cambridge, UK and her MD from the Pritzker School of Medicine at the University of Chicago in Illinois. She is currently a resident at the University of Washington Medical Center in Seattle, Washington. Her research focuses on the labia
minora and its role as a sexually responsive tissue distinct from the labia majora. Her research will examine both the anatomic and histologic relationships of the labia minora to the erectile tissues of the clitoral body and bulb, as well as its autonomic innervation. The current understanding of the anatomy and innervation of the vulva is superficial and crucial for surgical procedures of the female genitalia. In addition, there is a need to understand the role of the labia minora in the female sexual response.

2. Rose Khavari, MD: Rare Cell Selection Using Microfluidic Nanotechnology
Dr. Khavari graduated from the University of Texas at Arlington after transferring from Shahid Beheshti University in Tehran, Iran. She is currently a resident in urology at Baylor College of Medicine in Houston, Texas. Her research will test the hypothesis that a unique nanotechnology device, Bio-MEMS (Bio Microelectromechanical systems) can be used to capture and select rare cells to improve the diagnosis and treatment of men with either urologic cancers or male infertility. She proposes to use the Bio-MEMS to identify rare malignant cells in circulation or in the urine of patients with renal cell carcinoma or prostate cancer. She will also use this same technological approach to improve semen processing, specifically the isolation of rare sperm found in a testis biopsy from men with non-obstructive azoospermia to be used for intracytoplasmic sperm injection. It is hoped that this technology will improve the likelihood of fertilization and pregnancy using assisted reproductive technologies.

3. Ruthie R. Su, MD: The Endocannabinoid System in Human Bladder Cancer
Dr. Su is a resident at the University of Pittsburgh, Montefiore Hospital in Pennsylvania. She received her BS from the University of California, Berkeley and then attended medical school at Mount Sinai School of Medicine in New York. Her project tests the hypothesis that the cannabinoid receptors may have a possible role in treating various lower urinary tract symptoms (LUTS) and modulating the nociceptive response. Her focus is on the expression and role of the CB1 and CB2 cannabinoid receptors in the bladder. Specifically, she will test if CB receptor expression is altered in the disease state of human bladder cancer. These cannabinoid agonists and antagonists have obvious therapeutic potential and should improve patient outcomes if the hypothesis is correct.

Society of Women in Urology 2009 AUA Travel Award Recipient:
Julie M. Riley, MD

By: Jennifer L. Dodson, MD, PhD

The purpose of the SWIU AUA Travel Award is to encourage women urology residents to actively participate in the AUA annual meeting and related SWIU activities. The award provides $1,000.00 to assist with the travel expenses of a woman resident presenting her research at a podium or poster session. The award winner will also present her research at the SWIU Sunday Breakfast Meeting at the AUA.

This year, the recipient of the SWIU Travel Award is Julie M. Riley, currently a urology resident at the University of Missouri-Columbia. She will be presenting her abstract entitled: “Universal Stenting of Renal Transplants Associated with a Low Complication Rate When Quality Assurance Ensures Stent Removal”. The aim of this study was to evaluate the ability of quality assurance measures to ensure timely removal of ureteral stents placed during renal transplantation. The authors found that no retained stents occurred during the study period, and overall, they concluded that ureteric complications were low when universal stenting with monitoring was performed. Please join us in congratulating Dr. Riley on her research accomplishments.

Residents’ Corner

By Michelle Jo Semins, MD

I was on my feet along with everybody around me in Raymond James Stadium. All of us in black and gold were silent, but the air was thick with prayer and intense emotions of fear, hope, and excitement. With 2 minutes and 37 seconds left in Super Bowl XLIII, our beloved Steelers were behind for the first time all game. And so we stood in nervous disbelief until Ben Roethlisberger hit Santonio Holmes for an unbelievable acrobatic catch in the corner of the end zone with 35 seconds left on the clock, giving the Steelers a 27–23 lead late in the fourth quarter. The Steelers went on to win their 6th national title, the most ever by any National Football League team. For all Pittsburgh fans it was a moment of pride, celebration, and unity. I looked at my brother when it was all over and said: “that was NOT fun!” His reply: “it was even MORE fun because it was NOT fun!”

And he was right. To be there live and to ride that emotional roller coaster to such a thrilling conclusion was an experience I will NEVER forget. For a diehard Steelers fan, it was an all-time high. It took me to another world for a night, and I couldn’t stop talking about it for weeks — just ask all of my Baltimore friends. And it was smack in the middle of my residency.

I am writing about this subject not (entirely) to gloat over any who might root for another team (like, say, the Ravens), but to remind residents of the importance of our mental health. It is very easy to get stuck in the grind of residency and not come up for air. Working long hours and spending off-time only sleeping, showering, eating, or satisfying other basic human needs is often the routine we adopt. But another human need is pleasure. Though there are many pleasures along with pains in residency, happiness outside of the hospital is something that every resident should seek on a routine basis. Residency is strenuous, and we often forget to take care of ourselves. So, if you don’t already have a passion, find one. Whether it be dancing, reading, sports, exercise, family, poker, skydiving, or the Pittsburgh Steelers; find it, cherish it, and make time for it and for yourself, even if only for one hour a week... for your mental health. I turn 30 in one week — just like that, my 20s are gone, and I’m still in residency. You only live once.
Dues are Due!

Help keep SWIU thriving! If you haven’t paid your dues this year, please submit payment today. You can pay your dues quickly and easily online at www.swiu.org. Or, call the SWIU office at (847) 517-7225 for assistance.

Address Corrections Requested

Please notify the SWIU of any changes in your contact information, including change of address, phone or fax numbers, and email address. This information is only disseminated to the membership and is used for networking, one of our primary missions. Thank you.

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