

THE AWIMS ADVISOR

NEWS FROM THE ALLIANCE FOR WOMEN IN MEDICINE & SCIENCE

Dear Colleagues,

It's Women's History Month! This year's theme is "Women Who Advocate for Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion." In this edition, you will read about many of our own women leaders at SIU Medicine whose impact in the EDI space is immeasurable. What women leaders have influenced you? Challenged you in a way that made you better, stronger? Given you a seat at the table? Please take a moment to thank these advocates for all they do to support you and move the gender equity needle.

My heartfelt thanks to each of you for the pivotal role you play in our gender equity movement. You are indeed advocates for equity, diversity, and inclusion and we also honor you this month. We will continue to move forward together.

Vidhya Prakash, MD, Director of SIU AWIMS



The AWIMS Advisor Editorial Board



Dr. Vidhya Prakash, Editor-In-Chief
"Champions keep playing until they get it right."
Billie Jean King



Ms. Tyra Jones, Associate Editor
"Don't be so hard on yourself. Be perfectly okay with being who YOU are."
Stephanie Lahart



Dr. Ayame Takahashi, Associate Editor
"Courage doesn't always roar. Sometimes courage is the quiet voice at the end of the day saying, 'I will try again tomorrow.'"
Mary Anne Radmacher



Dr. Oluwaseun Adeleke, Associate Editor
"It always seems impossible until it's done."
Nelson Mandela

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AWIMS Spotlight: Lesley Barfield-Robinson



Role at SIU Medicine: Program Director for the Office of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion, SIU School of Medicine.

Born and raised: Born and raised in Springfield, Illinois.

Birthday: August 17th

Family: My hubby, 5 children and 2 grandchildren

Favorite Book: *Black Women's Mental Health*

What do you like about the book? I like the fact that it touches on a lot of things that Black women experience that are overlooked in the society, and I think it offers a different view being said by a Black woman... "Only a Black woman could tell a Black woman's story."

Hobbies: Reading, shopping (this is more like a therapy than a hobby, lol), sitting on the porch to absorb my environment and enjoy God's creation.

Personal Heroes: My deceased mother, who taught me so many things so early: survival, strength, professionalism, faith and how to navigate life. Growing up, these characteristics became a part of me and paved life for me.

Most Embarrassing Moment: I cannot really pick one. Just basic moments like falling in front of people, walking with a stained shirt, or food in my teeth without being aware of it.

What is your advice for achieving work-life balance?

1. Accept that you don't have to do everything in one day. When you leave work, "leave" work.
2. Make sure you are able to define who you are outside of work just as you define who you are at work. Both sides of the coin are important.

What is the best piece of advice a mentor gave you? Be yourself, and stand up for what is right: "Stand up for something or you fall for anything." This has stuck with me since high school.

What is your unique contribution to Women in Medicine and Science and SIU SOM? As a native of Springfield, and a product of an underserved population, I fully understand the social determinants of health in the community we serve. I have the opportunity to bridge the gap of mistrust in the health system by facilitating the opportunity for medical professionals to meet the needs of their patients where they are. This involves the HEALTH D.E.P.O.T.S. which creates a space for the community to utilize health care resources. Physicians, residents and medical students help to provide screening tests, health education, and other health-related activities in the community, thus fostering trust in the health system.

Is there anything else you would like to say to AWIMS Members? I witnessed AWIMS since its creation, and I am so excited about how far it has grown. AWIMS has been a positive contribution to the Springfield community and has made huge impacts. I feel honored to be considered for this edition's highlight. Thank you!

Adopt a Family

AWIMS adopted a family through [Contact Ministries](#) for the holiday season. Through this special program, AWIMS Community Engagement Committee members contributed gifts based on the family's wishes for Christmas. Special thanks to Ms. Erica Austin and our AWIMS Community Engagement team for bringing extra cheer to a deserving family.



#HeForShe Panel Discussion



Pictured left to right: Dr. Aysha Rafaquat, Dr. Robert Robinson, Dr. Douglas Carlson, and Dr. Wiley Jenkins

Dr. Aysha Rafaquat, assistant professor of Pediatrics and AWIMS Education Committee co-chair, expertly led an engaging panel discussion of leaders on the topic of #HeForShe allyship. Featured panelists included Dr. Douglas Carlson, Professor and Chair of the Department of Pediatrics, Dr. Wiley Jenkins, Professor and interim Chair of the Department of Population Science and Policy, and Dr. Robert Robinson, Professor and Internal Medicine Hospitalist faculty.

Panelists talked about the importance of recognizing one's own implicit biases in leadership, how equity is essential to fulfilling our mission in caring for our patients, and the importance of working together to eliminate the pay gap. Key quotes from each were:

Work-Life Integration

"We should look at how we work to accommodate life, and not the other way around." Dr. Wiley Jenkins

Why equity is important

"An equitable environment helps all of us." Dr. Robert

"It is critical to have diversity of perspectives to fulfill our mission." Dr. Wiley Jenkins

Tracking metrics of success in equity work

"We're on a journey, we need to measure that journey, and we need to hold ourselves accountable." Dr. Douglas Carlson

Lunch Crunch!



Lunch Crunch participants, pictured left to right: Dr. Anand Patel, Ms. Katharine Patel, Ms. Gayle Jennings, and Ms. Jessica Derhake

SIU School of Medicine (SOM) held its very first “Lunch Crunch” on December 15th. Led by Ms. Jessica Derhake, Director of Labor Relations at SIU SOM, the program’s objective is “to create a weekly wellness program that provides opportunity, instruction, and peer accountability to support our staff in their fitness and overall health goals.” The guiding principles of the program are support for all levels of fitness, camaraderie building, and education combined with movement. A collaborative group including AWIMS, cHOP, Human Resources, and faculty and staff across our institution helped with program planning. Ms. Katharine Patel, SIU SOM Dietician and Nutrition specialist, led the first Lunch Crunch session with a walk around the SIU SOM campus followed by an informative session on healthy eating during the holidays. More sessions to come in 2024 and beyond.

Kenniebrew-McNeese Conference



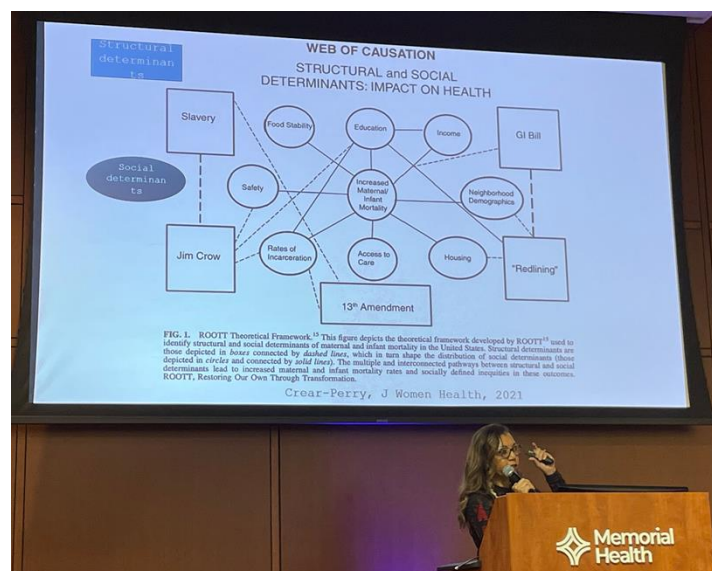
The second annual Kenniebrew-McNeese Conference, co-directed by Dr. Wendi El-Amin (pictured above) and Dr. Kemia Sarraf, took place on February 9th at the Memorial Learning Center in Springfield, Illinois. The first conference was named after Dr. Alonzo Homer Kenniebrew, a groundbreaking leader from Springfield, Illinois, who was the first Black physician to own and operate a surgical hospital. Last year, this conference was renamed the Kenniebrew-McNeese Conference to honor the beloved physician educator and leader, the late Reverend Wesley Robinson-McNeese. Dr. McNeese served SIU for many years as the first Associate Dean for Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion, and later as SIU System Executive Director for Diversity Initiatives and Special Advisor to the SIU Department of Antiracism, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion. His legacy lives on at SIU and in our community. The conference theme was very aptly named “On the Shoulders of Giants.”

A community forum took place on February 8th, with a focus on the political determinants of health. The discussion was powerful and thought-provoking as our community shed light on the healthcare system’s opportunities to focus on upstream drivers of health. The conference itself was filled with amazing workshops highlighting and raising awareness about health disparities and inequities. The broad range of topics included mitigating bias when writing letters of recommendation for medical students, and demonstrating inequities in health care among different populations. There was immense creativity in the format of the presentations. The US healthcare system was

put on “trial” in a simulated court room to raise awareness about atrocities committed against people of color in the name of medical science. In another session, speakers used wooden puzzle pieces to illustrate how we all must make choices in our lives to achieve balance and wellness.

Plenary speakers shared many pearls of wisdom. Dr. Gloria Richard-Davis (pictured below) addressed the impact of structural, social, and political determinants of health on our patients, offering much food for thought about our healthcare system. Dr. Justin Bullock spoke openly about his struggles with bipolar disorder. His heartfelt narrative about his inspiring journey resonated deeply with many. The lunch hour presentation was a “story slam” entitled “Wicked Problems,” or problems without clear solutions. Dr. Kevin Dorsey, former Dean of SIU School of Medicine spoke from the heart about a family member’s cancer journey. Dr. Christine Todd spoke movingly about her experience as a “model minority” and how that stereotype put blinders on teachers who missed obvious signs of abuse. Dr. Vidya Sundareshan shared her experiences as a leader during the COVID-19 pandemic. Dr. Vidhya Prakash talked about the promotion and tenure process at SIU School of Medicine. Ms. Erica Austin spoke about her courageous breast cancer journey. The final speaker of the day was Dr. Kerri Lockhart, whose presentation, “Rest is not a Reward,” was a message to all that we owe it to ourselves to not only rest, but also follow our intuition when making career transitions.

Not only were we on the shoulders of giants, but we were also in the presence of giants. The courage, vulnerability, and passion conveyed by these present-day heroes give all of us hope for the future of healthcare. I think both Dr. Kenniebrew and Dr. McNeese would have been proud!



AMWA/AWIMS Screening of the film, *Ms. Diagnosed*



On March 13th, SIU School of Medicine’s American Medical Women’s Association ([AMWA](#)) chapter and AWIMS co-hosted a special screening of the groundbreaking documentary film, *Ms. Diagnosed*. The film provides an intimate look into the lives of several women patients and their complicated relationship with the healthcare system. Dismissed or ignored when discussing their symptoms with an array of healthcare professionals, these patients endured considerable trauma and dire consequences as a result of delays in diagnosis of serious medical conditions. These poignant stories, coupled with interviews with physician and healthcare leaders, make it clear that gender inequities abound in medicine in large part due to a dearth of research done on women. Special thanks to Dr. Alex Hopkins, Ms. Jessica Derhake, and Ms. Reise Malone for organizing this event and to Dr. Hopkins and Ms. Malone for facilitating a powerful discussion among attendees after the film.

Articles

[Gender Disparity in Citations in High-Impact Journal Articles](#)

[Women in Medicine: Setting the Agenda for Change](#)

[Physician Burnout Through the Female Lens: A Silent Crisis](#)

[Wellbeing and Emotional Resiliency in Academic Medicine](#)

[“We’re Not Taken Seriously”: Describing the Experiences of Perceived Discrimination in Medical Settings for Black Women](#)

[Workplace Violence Against Nurses: A Narrative Review](#)

[Barriers and enablers for the implementation of trauma-informed care in healthcare settings: a systematic review | Implementation Science Communications | Full Text \(biomedcentral.com\)](#)



Dr. Wesley McNeese’s Life Motto

“Be not wise in thine own eyes.’ I tend to have some thoughts and opinions about many things, but that doesn’t mean I think I’m necessarily the wisest person in the room. I recognize that other people’s ideas may be just as sound and just as good.”

Source: [A“Q&A with Dr. W.G. Robinson-McNeese,” Springfield Business Journal](#)

Women's History Month: Honor a Mentor

To Be Remembered and Seen is Truly a Gift

The mentor I would like to honor this women's history month is Geri Fox, MD. She is currently the Chair of Psychiatry at the University of Illinois in Rockford. Dr. Fox was never a direct teacher of mine, but we have crossed paths many times over the years. We first met when I was a psychiatry resident at Northwestern University, applying for child psychiatry fellowship programs, and she was the Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (CAP) fellowship director at the University of Illinois in Chicago. I ended up going to New York for my child psychiatry fellowship and stayed on as faculty for a total of 10 years before coming back to Illinois to start a brand new child psychiatry fellowship program. I ran into Dr. Fox again that year at an Illinois gathering during a national conference. To my astonishment, she remembered me! I suspect she has an extremely good memory for names and faces anyway, but she also remembered that I had gone to Northwestern. To be remembered and seen is truly a gift. That was the beginning of a long-distance mentoring relationship. She always had time for a call to discuss academic politics and curriculum issues. She would invite me to participate in workshops at meetings. We have even had a "difficult conversation," which, to be honest, was not that difficult given that I 100% trusted she would hear me and understand. The world would be a much better place if there were more people like Dr. Geri Fox.

Dr. Ayame Takahashi

Women Who Advocate for Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion

Historically, women have been integral to the advocacy of equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) in the United States. They have embraced multiple roles in championing social justice, advancing gender and racial equity, and fostering inclusive spaces where women can thrive. This month, we celebrate the critical role women have played in shaping American history and acknowledge the ongoing contributions of countless women towards realizing these goals. I will highlight three women. One of them has made historic impact and others are women leaders here at SIU who continue to leave footprints in diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Dr. Rebecca Lee Crumpler made history by becoming the first African American woman to earn a medical degree in the United States. She earned her MD from the New England Female Medical College in 1864. Dr. Crumpler devoted her life to serving marginalized communities who otherwise would not have had access to healthcare. A

trailblazer in every regard, she broke racial and gender barriers in her time and improved the welfare of her community. Her legacy lives on.

Dr. Wendi El-Amin, Associate Dean for EDI at SIU School of Medicine and a Professor of Family and Community Medicine and Medical Education, is deeply committed to establishing equity. Her efforts to dismantle systemic structures and policies that contribute to health disparities make her a standout figure in our community. “Making the invisible visible,” a popular saying of hers, depicts her passion for meeting the health needs of unseen, underserved populations. She spearheads initiatives and programs to make health resources available to community members by meeting them where they are. Beyond her role as a physician, Dr. El-Amin is an educator who is passionate about her students' success, going the extra mile to provide tutelage and guidance to those in need. She revels in the joy of seeing them graduate and achieve greater feats in their chosen sub-specialties. Actively involved in the community, Dr. El-Amin serves on the boards of the Central Illinois Boys and Girls Club, the Springfield YMCA, and the Community Foundation for the Land of Lincoln. She has received numerous awards and recognition for her excellence in teaching and pivotal role in community service.

Ms. Kelly Hurst serves as an Equity and Inclusion Strategist at SIU School of Medicine, where she develops educational curricula focused on anti-racism strategies for students, staff, and faculty, and as a clinical instructor in the Department of Medical Humanities. In collaboration with other faculty members, she oversees the Health Equity Scholars pathway, an elective program that aims to educate scholars on equity and foster community engagement across various dimensions of diversity. As an avid speaker, Kelly has represented the organization at numerous conferences, locally and nationally, promoting EDI work. She offers strategic initiatives that impact EDI policies and procedures and also provides a collaborative space for everyone. Ms. Hurst embodies the principles of what EDI stands for, passionately striving to dismantle barriers to equity in diverse spaces through education and advocacy.

The contributions of Dr. Rebecca Lee Crumpler, Dr. Wendi El-Amin, and Ms. Kelly Hurst highlight the role of women's relentless commitment and innovation in advancing equity, diversity, and inclusion. Their stories celebrate past achievements and inspire future efforts to strive for a just and equitable society.

Dr. Oluwaseun Adeleke

AWIMS Advisory Board



Left to right:
Wendi El-Amin, MD
John Flack, MD
Susan Hingle, MD
Kari Wolf, MD

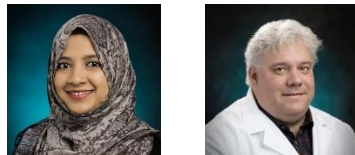


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“Organize, agitate, educate
must be our war cry.”
Susan B. Anthony

“Women and girls can do
whatever they want. There is
no limit to what we as women
can accomplish.”
Michelle Obama

