

THE AWIMS ADVISOR

NEWS FROM THE ALLIANCE FOR WOMEN IN MEDICINE & SCIENCE

WE WILL PREVAIL

Dr. Vidhya Prakash

Dear Colleagues,

September is the [AMA's Women in Medicine month!](#) It is refreshing to see that one of the AMA's newly adopted principles is to "further gender equity among physicians." Please take a moment to thank your women in medicine and science colleagues and friends who further our mission and make our world a better place. I have certainly reflected on all those who inspire me and invite you to celebrate a cherished mentor of mine, [Dr. Wendi El-Amin](#).

Through the whirlwind of the last six months, I have remained hopeful and focused on all the silver linings. In lieu of play dates my family and I had many more family movie nights, cuddled together on a couch with a large bowl of popcorn. My eight-year-old made his very own birthday cake with minimal help from his mom. I got to know more about my ten-year-old's crush (shhh).

On the work front, I was moved by our SIU family's sense of solidarity through shared values, respect, and trust. Crisis brought out the very best in us. Our institution's leadership and engagement to combat COVID-19 and prioritize becoming an anti-racist institution have been inspiring. During this unprecedented time, I remain hopeful that we will get through this together and in the end, recognize our collective strength. We will prevail.

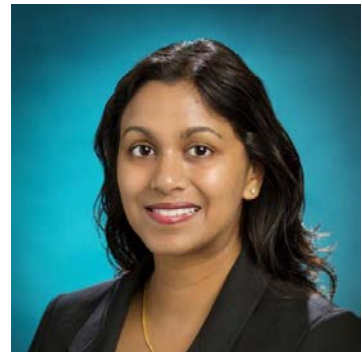


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AWIMS earns 2020 Inspiring Affinity Group Award from "INSIGHT into Diversity" magazine

The Alliance for Women and Medicine in Science was one of 38 recipients recognized for providing mentoring, collaboration, social networking opportunities, and more

By Lauren Crocks

The SIU School of Medicine Alliance of Women in Medicine and Science (AWIMS) group has been named a recipient of *INSIGHT Into Diversity* magazine's **2020 Inspiring Affinity Group Award!** *INSIGHT Into Diversity* is the oldest and largest diversity and inclusion publication and job board in higher education today. It is the premiere resource for D and I news and information, the creators of the annual Higher Education Excellence in Diversity (HEED) Award, and the creators of Viewfinder Campus Climate Surveys. *INSIGHT* is also the only remaining print magazine today focused exclusively on diversity and inclusion in higher education and beyond.

This award is being presented as a tribute to programs that are inspiring and encouraging higher education professionals to come to a campus because they have created employee resource groups that offer mentoring, collaboration, social networking opportunities, and more. These programs will matter as we are in the middle of this unprecedented period of uncertainty.

The 2020 Inspiring Affinity Group award recipients, including AWIMS, will be profiled in the upcoming July/August issue of *INSIGHT Into Diversity* magazine.



Mindfulness Retreat

AWIMS members attend spring retreat, learn Mindfulness skills

By Steven Sandstrom

During a time of world turmoil, mindfulness is especially relevant.

Ms. Bridget Rolens of HSHS Mind-Body Health Services led AWIMS members in another phenomenal mindfulness retreat on May 30, 2020. Mindfulness is defined by Ms. Rolens as "bringing awareness to what we experience in the present moment and relating to the experience in a particular way." The retreat started with a body scan, designed to limit dwelling on the past and future and instead, focus on the present experience. Attendees used present sensations in the body as an anchor for when the mind naturally tends to wander. Guided meditation and mindful eating were a wonderful way to stay centered and present.

Explore more resources on mindfulness at st-johns.org/mindbody.

Corona Virus Sanity Guide: tenpercent.com/coronavirussanityguide

10% Happier App: tenpercent.com/



The Impostor Phenomenon!

Department of Internal Medicine residents and faculty navigate the Impostor Phenomenon together

By Vidhya Prakash

Dr. Priyanka Parajuli, PGY3 in the Internal Medicine residency training program, delivered a thought-provoking and informative presentation on the Impostor Phenomenon during Department of Internal Medicine grand rounds on June 16th. Defined by Dr. Pauline Clance as "the psychological experience of believing that one's accomplishments came about not through genuine ability, but as a result of having been lucky, having worked harder than others, or having manipulated other people's impressions," the Impostor Phenomenon is fairly pervasive among highly productive and talented professionals.

Dr. Susan Hingle and Dr. Vidhya Prakash conducted virtual, interactive sessions for faculty on June 23rd and for residents on June 30th. With an emphasis on having honest dialogue in a safe space, attendees discussed the impostor cycle (see pic below) and shared personal stories which shed light on why impostor feelings surfaced during their lives. The experience was enlightening and healing, and underscored the importance of open discussion to overcome impostor feelings.

The Clance Impostor Scale

The Impostor Phenomenon

5 Types of Impostor Syndrome

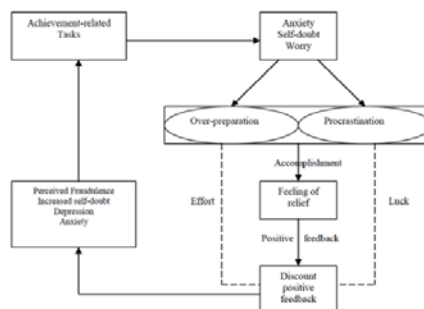


Figure 1. Diagram illustrating the Impostor Cycle based on Clance (1985). The cycle begins with the assignment of achievement related tasks.

Dr. Ruchika Goel Selected as a "40 Under 40" Leader

Dr. Ruchika Goel, a Hematology/Oncology physician at SIU School of Medicine, featured as a notable leader in Springfield Business Journal's "40 Under 40"

By Vidhya Prakash

Each year, the Springfield Business Journal showcases forty leaders under the age of forty who have contributed substantially to their community. These visionary and incredibly committed individuals represent a diverse array of talent and expertise in the Springfield area.

Our very own Dr. Ruchika Goel was selected as a recipient of this honor in 2020. Dr. Goel is a Hematology/Oncology physician at SIU School of Medicine and director of the Mississippi Valley Regional Blood Center. Dr. Goel successfully instituted a regional convalescent plasma program for patients infected with COVID-19 in record time. A collaborative operation, the program greatly benefitted our patients with severe infection. We are, indeed, fortunate to have a talented and inspiring leader like Dr. Goel with us!

[FortyUnderForty Profiles](#)



Allyship

AWIMS takes steps to strengthen its role as an ally in the fight against systemic racism and injustice

By Vidhya Prakash

The COVID-19 pandemic took our nation by storm, shaking our communities and families to their core. It was not long before the pandemic of systemic racism and associated violence took hold of our nation, claiming the lives of Breonna Taylor, Dreasjon Reed, and George Floyd. The response of SIU School of Medicine's (SOM) leadership was remarkable, beginning with strong statements speaking out against racism from our Dean, Dr. Jerry Kruse, our President, Dr. Daniel Mahoney, and our Associate Dean of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion, Dr. Wendi El-Amin. Further, Dr. Sacharitha Bowers penned a powerful anti-racism pledge for our institution.

AWIMS as an organization prides itself on allyship in the ongoing fight against racism and violence. Members participated in a powerful Black Lives Matter solidarity procession in Springfield on May 31st. While the pain was palpable, the sense of unity and shared strength were inspiring. AWIMS also had the honor of promoting SIU SOM's White Coats for Black Lives march on June 18th. Led by leaders from SNMA and AMWA, the march exemplified SIU School of Medicine's united front against racism and injustice. A collaboration among AWIMS, the Department of Medical Humanities, cHOP, and the Office of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion will bring more forums to discuss our process of navigating systemic racism at our institution and generating meaningful solutions. Our fight has only begun, but we will prevail stronger than ever.

Articles and Books Relating to Allyship:

[The Guide to Allyship](#)

[How to Be an Ally](#)

[Dismantle Collective Resources](#)

[Book Review: So you want to talk about race](#)

AWIMS Journal Club: Why Black doctors like me are leaving faculty positions in academic medical centers

Review of Dr. Uché Blackstock's article, "Why Black doctors like me are leaving faculty positions in academic medical centers" and "The Guide to Allyship"

By Vidhya Prakash

Dr. Uché Blackstock, in her deeply introspective and powerful article, "Why Black doctors like me are leaving faculty positions in academic centers," candidly discusses her struggles as a Black woman physician in academic medicine. Dr. Blackstock begins with the sobering fact that Black Americans have the worst health outcomes compared to any other racial group, and how diversification of the health care workforce is one way to address health disparities. However, when discrimination and racial bias abound, it's not surprising that only 6% of physicians are Black when Black people represent 13% of the US population.

Dr. Blackstock made the difficult decision to leave her academic medical institution, citing racism, sexism, a toxic work environment, and a fear of retaliation for voicing her concerns. She further discusses social isolation of Black medical students, the undercurrent of bias in student evaluations, and lack of Black faculty mentors as role models. Even physical environments of institutions, where portraits on the walls are not representative of a diverse group of individuals, can invoke feelings of isolation and lack of belonging.

Dr. Blackstock emphatically states, "If academic medical centers and their leaders cannot adequately support Black students and promote Black faculty, then they will continue to leave." She underscores the importance of active listening on the part of leadership and commitment of resources and time to address systemic racism at its core.

Dr. Blackstock's article was a great segue to "The Guide to Allyship."

"To be an Ally is to....."

1. Take on the struggle as your own.
2. Transfer the benefits of your privilege to those who lack it.
3. Amplify voices of the oppressed before your own.
4. Acknowledge that even though you feel pain, the conversation is not about you.
5. Stand up, even when you feel scared.
6. Own your mistakes and de-center yourself.
7. Understand that your education is up to you and no one else."

How to be an ally

Dismantle Collective Resources

Women in Surgery Panel Discussion

Katherine Lincoln and Morgan Watts moderate an enlightening panel discussion with a stellar group of surgeons.

By Vidhya Prakash

Katherine Lincoln and Morgan Watts, two extraordinary medical students in the class of 2021, moderated a thought-provoking panel discussion with a diverse array of surgeons. Panelists included Dr. Diane Hillard-Sembell, Dr. John Mellinger, Dr. Jan Rakinic, Dr. Dana Crosby, Dr. Erlena Josifi, and Dr. Prasad Poola. Dr. Robert Robinson, AWIMS Education committee co-chair, was a key organizer for the event.

In terms of managing a busy schedule, panelists emphasized the importance of planning and organization. "You wish you had thirty-six hours in a day to get it all done," said Dr. Josifi, an Orthopedic Surgery resident. Time management and flexibility were cited as key factors in staying on target.

With respect to work-life integration, Dr. Crosby and Dr. Rakinic discussed how they focus on activities they enjoy during time off, be it travel or reading. Dr. Hillard-Sembell pointed out that if one lives only as a doctor or surgeon, happiness will fall to the wayside. She remarked that it was important to prioritize and plan accordingly.

Panelists weighed in on the impact of switching step 1 to pass/fail. Dr. Poola discussed the need for a more holistic review of an applicant. Dr. Mellinger expressed that moving away from step 1 scores will help mitigate much bias in the field of Surgery. Dr. Crosby shared an Otolaryngology Resident Talent Assessment (ORTA) which provides a social and behavioral assessment of residents.

Advice for applicants to General Surgery and surgical specialties included dwell time in areas of interest, staying present, regularly reading about patients' disease processes on rotations, and the importance of mentorship.

The discussion ended with how best to include women in Surgery. Dr. Crosby commented that although we have come a long way, there is still a long road ahead. Bias is now more subtle and therefore more difficult to navigate. Dr. Rakinic and Dr. Hillard-Sembell discussed the concept of shared positions which may make Surgery more attractive to women. Dr. Josifi shouted out to Dr. Norman Otsuka and Dr. Austin Beason for attending the session, underscoring the importance of leadership and colleagues making inclusion a priority.

AWIMS Book Club

Dr. Anna Cianciolo discusses the powerful book, *Women Scientists in America: Struggles and Strategies to 1940*

By Anna Cianciolo

“History, despite its wrenching pain, cannot be unlived, but if faced with courage, need not be lived again.” – Maya Angelou

On July 17 (7pm, via Zoom), the AWIMS Book Club discussed Chapter 3 of Margaret Rossiter’s compelling historical account of women in science and medicine, *Women Scientists in America: Struggles and Strategies to 1940*. In this chapter, entitled “Women’s Work in Science,” Rossiter presents how male-dominated academic departments and research labs dealt with the rising number of females earning science PhDs. By the late 1800’s, women had successfully infiltrated science PhD programs, but universities did not welcome female graduates as professorial equals to men. Instead, resistance to a female scientific workforce and new developments in the nature of scientific work combined to produce a sex-segregated science labor market. Females with science PhDs could only obtain jobs men did not want, becoming (1) career assistants in the research centers and natural history museums that were growing in number and scale at that time (hierarchical sex segregation); (2) professors in emerging “feminine” scientific disciplines aimed at social engineering, including most prominently home economics, but also nutrition and hygiene and physical education, publishing evidence-based “advice literature” for mothers (territorial sex segregation); and (3) deans of women, charged with supervising women’s dormitories and overseeing women’s moral development (territorial sex segregation).

Discussion of this chapter was lively, noting the parallel concerns about pay equity and upward mobility voiced by women scientists 130 years ago and by women scientists today. Also discussed were the mechanisms underlying modern sex segregation in the sciences and clinical disciplines, as well as the persistence of forces resisting gender and other diversity and inclusion in science and medicine.

"A Manly Profession"

Dr. Anna Cianciolo provides an overview of chapter 4 of Margaret Rossiter's "Women Scientists in America: Struggles and Strategies to 1940," and highlights participants' powerful discussion during AWIMS Book Club.

By Anna Cianciolo

"If you know you are on the right track, if you have this inner knowledge, then nobody can turn you off... no matter what they say." – Barbara McClintock, cytogeneticist and winner of the 1983 Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine

On August 17 (7pm, via Zoom), the AWIMS Book Club discussed Chapter 4 of Margaret Rossiter's compelling historical account of women in science and medicine, *Women Scientists in America: Struggles and Strategies to 1940*. In this chapter, entitled "A Manly Profession," Rossiter describes how emerging professional science organizations in the late 1800s excluded women through discriminatory admission standards and social practices. Despite making significant gains in scholarly training and contributions to science, women could not become full members or officeholders of these professional organizations unless they met unrealistically strict criteria that were not applied to men. Professional organizations' social functions actively excluded what few women members could attend, such as in "The Misogynist Dinner of the American Chemical Society," held at the AAAS annual meeting in August 1880. Instead, women met to exchange ideas and papers in women's general science clubs, which did not have access to the (male) experts in the scientific specialties. Although women at the time celebrated the many gains they had made in education, employment, and professional development, they soon discovered that relative to the gains for men in science, their progress had been minimal if not regressive. Chapter 5 will talk about women's early resistance to cultural and professional norms that prevented them from participating fully in science.

In some respects, tonight's discussion resembled a meeting of one of the women's science clubs. We talked about our projects—writing in particular—sharing words of wisdom and encouragement for finding one's voice in the literature and staying the course until the right audience is found. Writing resources shared included Lorelei Lingard's *Writer's Craft* primer series, published in *Perspectives in Medical Education* and the free, open weekly writing seminar "Writing Medicine," featuring Laurel Braitman and hosted by Stanford University's Medicine and the Muse Program (<https://www.laurelbraitman.com/writingmedicine>).

Becoming an Anti-Racist Institution

Dr. Christine Todd shares her thoughts regarding a collaborative town hall on the intersection of racism and trauma.

By Christine Todd

AWIMS co-hosted a virtual meeting last week with the Department of Medical Humanities, cHOP and the Office of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion to discuss the intersection of racism and trauma, following up on Dr. Kruse's call for us to be an anti-racist institution. We were honored to have Kelly Hurst from Crossroads and Dr. Kemia Sarraf from EDI and Medical Humanities lead the discussion.

We created a safe space and agreed to three important concepts, which would be a great starting point to keep in mind for any sensitive topic: stay engaged, speak your truth, and accept/embrace non-closure. We learned that trauma and traumatic responses show up in 4 behaviors: fight, flight, freeze and submit. I found these responses really helpful as 'clues' to when people are having a trauma response, and even to when I am having one. It was a good time to reflect on the fact that when I "shut down," am at a loss for words, or cease to care about something important, I should recognize that my response is rooted in some sort of trauma. I think I left this meeting much more able to realize when someone else is experiencing or reliving a traumatic situation.

We also expanded our understanding of the ways folks in our community at SIUSOM have experienced trauma. It ranged from bullying and job insecurity to the pain we feel when our names are labeled as "unpronounceable" to the feeling communicated in a hundred ways that we are unwelcome.

We had a great brainstorm about ways to reframe these traumas and avoid repeating them. I think a lot of people came away from this meeting with ideas about actions they can take both personally and as a team in their workspace.

I have been a member of the SIUSOM community in one way or another for 31 years, and am so proud to see our community tackling the huge issue of systemic racism and how it is baked into our own institution. I look forward to monthly town halls where we will continue to talk, develop and decide to act!

SPOTLIGHT

Featuring Barra Madden, SIUSOM Class of 2022

Role at SIU Medicine: Current MS3, Co-president for Student National Medical Association

Born and Raised: Rochester, New York

Birthday: August 11, 1993

Family: All of my family reside in New York; mother, stepfather, and 3 siblings. My biological father and stepmother reside in Alabama. I am fortunate to have a very strong support system although they are not physically here with me in Springfield.

Favorite Books: I wish I had more time to read for leisure but some of my favorite books are *Becoming* by Michelle Obama, *Black Man in a White Coat* by Damon Tweedy and *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* by Maya Angelou.

Hobbies: I absolutely love Zumba; basically, I love any hobby that includes dancing. I also enjoy working out, roller skating, and spending time with friends.

Proudest Moment: One of my proudest moments was being accepted into medical school.

Personal Hero: My mother, Pamela Brown. She is truly a strong woman who sacrificed her own happiness and comfort for the benefit of her children. I do not believe that I would be the woman I am today without her encouragement, prayers, and support.

Most Embarrassing Moment: I will never forget this moment. It was Valentine's Day 2010 and I was a junior in high school at the time. I wore these beautiful, cherry red patent leather 5-inch heels to school to celebrate the holiday. It was 5th period and I was heading downstairs to the cafeteria. On my way down the steps, I slipped and tumbled all the way down into the cafeteria. At the end of the steps, still on the floor, I looked up and there was my crush laughing at my fall.

What is your advice for achieving work-life balance? Unfortunately, I am still trying to improve my work-life balance. My biggest advice is **self-care**. The studying, UWorld blocks, research papers, etc. will always be there but one must take time to enjoy life outside of medicine. Once a week for at least 2 hours, do something that you enjoy. The field of medicine is time consuming and one must remember who they were before they became a physician.

What is the best piece of advice a mentor gave you? Always be your authentic self and never forget your reason for pursuing medicine.

What is your unique contribution to Women in Medicine and Science? Being an African American woman, I believe that it is crucial to have representation of woman in prestigious fields. Throughout my youth, I did not have a good depiction of medicine, nor did I ever believe that a girl from my socioeconomic background could be successful in life. As I progress in my career, I make sure to mentor, advocate, and champion for young women of marginalized communities. My unique contribution to women in medicine is my ability to be interconnected between both extremes of life. I am a part of the impoverished urban population, yet I am establishing my role in the innovative world of medicine. My strongest contribution and due diligence are helping to bridge the gap and decrease social determinants of health.



Featuring Alexander Worix, SIUSOM Class of 2021

Role at SIU Medicine: Fourth Year Medical Student

Born and Raised: Born in Chicago, IL and raised in Crete, IL (south suburbs of Chicago)

Birthday: February 11th, 1993

Family: I was born to Dr. Cheryl Anthony-Worix and Mr. Vance Worix in Chicago, IL and for the majority of the time, we thrived in the south suburbs of Chicago. My mother is currently practicing as a general internist in northwest Indiana and my father is a retired from the steel industry. I also have a sister who is three years older. She is currently a behavioral analyst for children on the autism spectrum in Austin, TX.

Favorite Books: The Alchemist by Paulo Coelho

Hobbies: Cooking (my favorite dish to make is chicken tikka masala), catching up with friends/family, following a television series, hiking

Proudest Moment: Being accepted to medical school.

Personal Hero: Barack and Michelle Obama. They have changed the image of what amazing leaders look like in this country.

Most Embarrassing Moment: Playing the clarinet for my 8th grade graduation and being off- key for half of the song. I believe the song was the black panther theme song.

What is your advice for achieving work-life balance? Achieving a good work-life balance means making sure you do the absolute maximum of what is expected of you from your job, but also leaving time for yourself, friends, and family outside of that commitment. In addition, it is really important to not overwhelm yourself. Being superhuman is not necessary to be successful. If you take on too much, then that can be overwhelming and throw off your psyche. It is important to find as many ways possible to sustain your sanity which directly supports your work ethic.

What is the best piece of advice a mentor gave you? No matter how you are viewed in this country based off what you look like, make sure to keep pushing and hold your head up high in the process.

What is your unique contribution to Women in Medicine and Science? I am and will continue to be an advocate for equality for all, especially for the hardworking women in the world. What I can contribute to this organization is showing my advocacy from another marginalized perspective as a gay black male. Also, I am proud and privileged to say that my mother is a Southern Illinois University School of Medicine alum (Class

of 1987). Growing up and seeing my mother as the breadwinner of the household really put into perspective how powerful women are.



Featuring Dawn DeFraties, Executive Director of SIU Office of Correctional Medicine

Role at SIU Medicine: Executive Director of the SIU Office of Correctional Medicine

Born and Raised: Lincoln, Illinois

Birthday: February 17th

Family: My 6th great grandfather's name was Moses Stanley. He fought in the Revolutionary War and was so committed to his beliefs and his new country that he changed our last name (my maiden name) to Standley – he added the “d” to signify “Damn the King”. If you know me, you know the feistiness is in my bloodline.

Favorite Books: *Roots* by Alex Haley is my all-time favorite book. Other favorites are *The Giving Tree* by Shel Silverstein, *Daring Greatly* by Brene Brown, and anything related to correctional medicine.

Hobbies: Reiki, my two sweet rescue pit bulls, learning about anything and everything (I'm really a total nerd). By the time this is published, I will have completed my first tandem skydive!

Proudest Moment: Proudest moments to me are the small victories we achieve every single day which could even be simply waking up to face the day when we are in a low spot, taking care of ourselves or others, random acts of kindness, or just making the world a better place because we are in it. If I had to choose one of my proudest proud moments, I would choose being part of history when I was selected as Office Director for the first African American woman ever elected to the United States Senate. That was so awesome!

Personal Hero: My mom – which I didn't realize the extent of what she had overcome in her life or the depth of her strength, character, and the legacy she left for me until years after she passed. Here's to you, Mom!

Most Embarrassing Moment: While there are probably many, I'll go with the time I walked into a high-level introduction meeting with a major partner and had music blaring from the iPad in my bag. I heard it but thought it was something they were playing in the reception area. When I got into the meeting someone asked, “Does anyone hear music?” Yeah. I did that. At least the meeting started with a huge laugh.

What is your advice for achieving work-life balance? Self-care is critical to maintaining a healthy relationship with yourself in order to foster balance in one's life. You have to take time to care for yourself and to remind ourselves and others that we and our needs are important too.

What is the best piece of advice a mentor gave you? I have two: 1) A former boss of mine who was a retired firefighter once said to me, “Sweet Pea, always be careful what you wish for.” He could not have been more correct. 2) “Always do the right thing, even if you’re doing it alone”. The reason this has always resonated with me is because there have been times in my life where the only thing I had was my integrity; it is the one thing that no one can take from me nor am I willing to give it away.

What is your unique contribution to Women in Medicine and Science? My unique contribution may be that I did not come to SIU SOM with an academic or medical background. Because of this, I think differently and have different experiences and approaches to things.



The Healer

Dr. Vidhya Prakash pays a tribute to her mentor, Dr. Wendi El-Amin

"I need you to breathe."

"I am breathing."

"I need you to breathe."

Her penetrating gaze bore into my soul, my very core. It was a meeting of two spirits, one a unified presence exuding peace and wisdom, grounded in granite-like equanimity, and the other scattered shards of turmoil and chaos, floating in a pool of uncertainty. I was suddenly aware of her breathing, now that she mentioned it, unhurried and steady like the calmest breeze.

"I just need you to stop. Just stop," she said, her gentle voice barely above a whisper.

And for a moment I stopped, giving my whirling thoughts pause and temporarily quelling my myriad emotions of disappointment, fear, and rage.

"Now, breathe in for four seconds.....no, I need you to do this with me now." Breathe in one..... what is wrong with me?.....and two.....I can't believe I'm having to do this....and three.....I need to calm down.....and four.....am I really calming down?...

"Now, hold it for seven seconds." One...I acknowledge the compassion in her eyes.....and two.....I sense the room around me..... and three.....did she get new books?.....and four....I need to focus on my breathing.....and five.....she did get new books.....and six.....I need to get that one....and seven.....why was I mad again?

"And out for eight."

And I was back in the present.

Dr. Wendi Wills El-Amin. Some would describe her as a woman. Others would declare she is a strong Black woman. Yet there are those who would argue she is a physician mom. She's a doctor first! No, she is absolutely a mother first! But she is a leader, first and foremost, several will proclaim while others will assert that she is, in

fact, a teacher. She is a teacher and mentor, don't forget mentor! And sponsor! For me, Dr. El-Amin is all these things and more. She is my spiritual guide and healer.

I think of Dr. El-Amin reflecting on this narrative and smiling. "Vidhya," she would say, "My identity is for nobody to define but me." This is one of many powerful lessons I have learned from her. She empowers me to own my authentic self. A rhythmic refrain of her powerful words hums in the back of my mind as I refuse to allow society or anyone else define me solely by my gender, race, profession, or even my role as a parent. I am an American woman who is proud of her Indian heritage. I am a wife, a mother, a teacher, a mentor, a physician, and a leader, not always in that order. Dr. El-Amin has taught me the importance of intersectionality, and how my multiple identities converge to form something powerful and dynamic.

I would be back in Dr. El-Amin's office countless more times, basking in the comfort of her plush, turquoise blue chairs and the calming environment she created. I would send her numerous frantic texts, only to be texted back with profound statements and words of wisdom that would suddenly put everything in perspective. She has a way of taking the worst of my emotions and helping me convert them into something positive and wholesome, taking me from the fiery flames of contempt and rage to the cool, peaceful waters of compassion and grace. Throughout my career, with the many highs came several lows, and she was always there as my holding environment to cushion the hard blows and hurts.

"Vidhya, what's wrong?"

"I'm fine, Wendi."

"What's wrong?"

"What do you mean? I'm fine!"

"What. Is. Wrong."

And the tears began to flow. Slow and steady at first, each tear owning its identity—sorrow, fear, disappointment, until one by one they pooled together quickly and gushed forth in collective angst and hopelessness. Breathe in for four, hold for seven, breathe out for eight. Whatever the crisis and whatever the trauma, Dr. El-Amin would invariably put everything on hold to help me put each fragmented piece of a shattered dream back together. I would often start with "I can't believe it didn't work out..." or "Can you believe they didn't even consider this?"

“Vidhya,” she told me. “The universe will not take from you what is meant for you.” Her words cloaked me with reassurance and relief. I recognized how much energy I had wasted with worry, when my focus should have been on my duty and the task at hand with complete faith that the universe did indeed have my back. It worked out. It didn’t work out. It didn’t matter. What mattered was that I was doing my best with courage, hope, and tenacity. “Keep marching,” she would tell me. “Keep marching.”

My identity as a physician is rooted in my ability to heal. I heal through prescribing antibiotics, referring patients to wound care, and through human interaction, by connecting with my patients. Who heals me? Dr. El-Amin is the healer of every emotional wound, providing therapy with each encouraging and kind word. On a broader level, in her role as Associate Dean of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion at SIU School of Medicine, she has humbled me with her integrity, bravery, and brilliance. She is the moral knife to the abscess of cowardice, injustice, and inaction. She is the courageous cure to fear and worry. She is the beating heart of our institution, providing life and renewal through her fearless leadership, her determination, her guts, passion, and drive. Now, breathe.



SIU's 3rd Annual Women in Medicine and Science Professional Development Conference

AWIMS hosts its 3rd annual, and very 1st virtual professional development conference!

By Vidhya Prakash

AWIMS hosted its very first virtual professional development conference on August 27th and August 28th. The conference featured Dr. Nancy Spector, Associated Dean for Faculty Development at Drexel University College of Medicine and Executive Director of ELAM; Dr. Farzana Haffizulla, Chair of the Department of Internal Medicine at Nova Southeastern University's Kiran C. Patel College of Osteopathic Medicine (KPCOM) and former AMWA president; and Ms. Jennifer Gill, Superintendent of Springfield Public School District 186.

Dr. Spector discussed key considerations when leading during a crisis, including the importance of a team remaining responsible and accountable, continual process improvement, and the need to periodically step back for a broader view. She also emphasized the need to prioritize one's health and that of family and colleagues. Her remarks on the positive impact of gender diversity, including improved patient outcomes when treated by female physicians, and the need to address systemic issues that marginalize women struck a chord with participants.

Ms. Gill described her personal journey through leadership, imparting pearls of wisdom such as "it is ok to say no" to requests that are not in line with your career goals, embracing a "connected, committed, and collaborative work environment," and how moving from order to chaos and drawing on creative potential were steps forward.

Dr. Haffizulla made invaluable observations about the impact of intersectionality on our society during the COVID-19 pandemic and on women in medicine and science. She emphasized the importance of exploring our multiple identities and how they impact our leadership styles. Dr. Haffizulla also underscored the intersectionality of our vital movements including Black Lives Matter, MeToo, and immigrant rights.

Award winners for our regional High School essay contest on women leaders were announced. Molly Harms from District 186 was awarded first place for her essay on Geraldine Ferraro. Runners up included Devanshika Sapra from Ball-Chatham for her

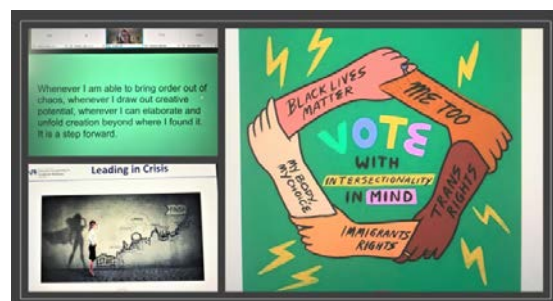
essay on Indira Gandhi, and Claire Ibbotson from Williamsville CUSD for her essay on her inspiring teachers.

We look forward to our virtual Leadership Development series which will take place every two weeks over the next several months. Dr. Hilary Sanfey, Mr. David Ziebler, Dr. Wendi El-Amin, Dr. Christine Todd, and Dr. John Mellinger will lead these sessions on topics including leading in your setting, coaching, microaggressions, using your voice, and fundamentals of leadership.

Our heartfelt thanks to our sponsors who made this conference possible: Memorial Health System, HSHS St. John's Hospital, SIU Departments of Internal Medicine, Surgery, Family and Community Medicine, Pediatrics, Medical Education, Population Science and Policy, the SIU Neuroscience Institute, and cHOP.

Special thanks to our entire AWIMS community, all who joined the conference, and to our AWIMS Executive Committee and Advisory Board. Also, many thanks to our conference planning committee members: Dr. Wendi El-Amin, Dr. Susan Hingle, Dr. Hilary Sanfey, Dr. Vidya Sundareshan, Dr. Heeyoung Han, Ms. Laura Worrall, and Dr. Stacy Sattovia. Also, much gratitude to Ms. Taran Ley from the Medical Library for her support and to Ms. Lydia Howes who created an inspiring video, "What AWIMS Means to Me" which was well-received at the conference, Mr. Ben Kirchhoff from Information Technology, and to the Continuing Professional Development staff, Ms. Judy Harbison, Ms. Barbara Shelow, and Ms. Jennifer Coyle.

We may have been physically distanced, but we were connected and engaged and left this conference feeling moved, inspired, and ready to lead!



ARTICLES

Black Women Account for Less than 3% of US Doctors. Is Health Care Finally Ready to Face Racism and Sexism?

An Unacceptable Crisis: Incidents of Domestic Violence Have Nearly Doubled During the Coronavirus Pandemic

Gender Differences in Resident Assessment

Women Physicians Report 2020: The Issues They Care About

Mindfulness Meditation: The Path to a Better Headspace

UN Secretary General's Policy Brief: the Impact of COVID-19 on Women

Consequences of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Manuscript Submissions by Women

Medscape Physician Compensation Report 2020

Allostatic Load is the Psychological Reason for our Pandemic Brain Fog

Characteristics of Faculty Accused of Academic Sexual Misconduct in the Biomedical and Health Sciences



"There is no limit to what we, as women, can accomplish"

"We should always have three friends in our lives -- one who walks ahead who we look up to and we follow; one who walks beside us, who is with us every step of our journeys; and then, one who we reach back for and we bring along after we've cleared the way."

Michelle Obama

AWIMS Advisory Board



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

Debra Klamen
David Steward
Hilary Sanfey
John Mellinger

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