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May 2000

CoE Forum Focuses on Future of Women's Health

On November 1–2, 1999, close to 300 representatives from the 17 National Centers of Excellence in Women's Health (CoE) and other individuals committed to improving women's health assembled in Washington, D.C. for the first CoE National Forum. Cosponsored by the Office on Women's Health (OWH) and the Association of Academic Health Centers, this 2-day event gave participants the opportunity to share their best practices and discuss the future challenges in women's health.

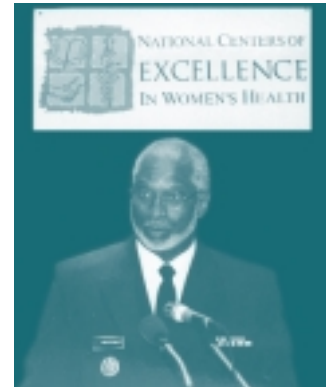
In his opening remarks, David Satcher, M.D., Ph.D., Assistant Secretary for Health and U.S. Surgeon General said, "It is encouraging to see what the CoEs have accomplished in just 3 years." He stated that the challenge for the future "is to work together to build a balanced health care system that focuses on improving quality of life and eliminating health disparities."

The meeting gave participants the opportunity to learn about the integrated model health care systems created by the current CoEs, to hear firsthand about success stories, and to network with colleagues with similar missions and commitments in women's health.

Participants attended workshops that covered topics within six key areas—clinical care, research, professional education, leadership, partnerships and alliances, and community and patient education. Sessions focused on strategies for improving quality of care, increasing the diversity of women participating in clinical research, integrating women's health in the undergraduate curriculum and postgraduate education, promoting and advancing women in academic health sciences, building effective community partnerships, and challenges and opportunities for creating women's community education

programs. Sessions also covered cultural competency issues, utilizing existing technologies and resources to advance women's health, strategies for successfully working with the media, and tapping into existing funding sources.

Wanda K. Jones, Dr.P.H., Deputy Assistant Secretary for Health—Women's Health, in her address to participants, thanked "all those who attended the first CoE Forum and contributed to its success. By working together and sharing our best practices, we can maximize our efforts to meet the health needs of diverse women across the life span."



Dr. David Satcher, Assistant Secretary for Health and U.S. Surgeon General speaks to Forum participants.

To receive an executive summary of the Forum, contact Sandi Lowery, DHHS OWH, Parklawn Building, 5600 Fishers Lane, Room 16A-55, Rockville, MD 20570, slowery@osophs.dhhs.gov, or download a copy from the OWH Website at (<http://www.4woman.gov/owh/coe/index.htm>).

WE COULDN'T HAVE DONE IT WITHOUT YOU!

The Office on Women's Health would like to thank the Association of Academic Health Centers (AHC) and their partners for making the first National Centers of Excellence in Women's Health (CoE) Forum possible. With their support and assistance, the first CoE Forum was a tremendous success. We especially appreciate the contributions made by Dr. Roger Bulger, AHC President, Dr. Clyde Evans, AHC Vice President, Dr. Marian Osterweis, AHC Executive Vice President, and Ms. Nancy Segal.



Women's Health Innovations

The National Centers of Excellence in Women's Health (CoEs) are redefining women's health with comprehensive programs that address the many issues women often find difficult to face, such as breast cancer, urinary incontinence, and domestic violence. As a result of their efforts, Haitian women at risk for breast cancer are learning about the importance of mammograms, women with urinary incontinence are learning about the many nonsurgical treatment options, and health providers are learning how to identify victims of domestic violence. The following programs are just a few examples of how the CoEs are impacting women's health.

Boston University Medical Center

Junior Faculty Outreach Project. Using a funding supplement from the Department of Health and Human Services, the Boston University CoE gave junior faculty the opportunity to compete for an award for community outreach projects. The CoE announced the funding in January 1999 as a competitive process for any junior faculty in the medical and public health school. The CoE received 13 applications from 12 departments and sections of the medical center. All were reviewed by a panel of CoE directors and rated based on scientific merit, impact on junior faculty career, and demonstrated ability to meet contract requirements.

The CoE awarded the Junior Faculty Outreach Project to Wendy Heiger-Bernays, Ph.D., an assistant professor in the School of Public Health, department of environmental Health, for her project "Hair Care Products: A Survey and Toxicological Assessment. A Community-Based Project in Support of ACE and Roxbury Hair Salons." Working with Alternatives for Community and Environment (ACE), an environmental justice law and education nonprofit organization, Dr. Heiger-Bernays is surveying women of color, specifically African Americans, who work in or visit participating salons. The survey will identify products used by the salons and the extent to which the operators, clients, and children are exposed to these products. Her research will determine the relative safety of key products that are being marketed as "less toxic" and if there is adequate ventilation in the salons for the maintenance of good health. Dr. Heiger-Bernays will develop fact sheets describing product ingredients and their safety and recommend measures salons can take to decrease women's health risks.



Center Directors pose for photo at CoE Forum

Breast Cancer Video Project for Haitian Women. The Boston University CoE is collaborating with the American Cancer Society, the Mattapan Community Health Center, and the Haitian-American Public Health Initiatives (HAPHI), a well-respected community group serving the Haitian community, in an effort to increase awareness about early detection of breast cancer among Haitian women. The purpose of the project is to develop an educational video to change Haitian women's attitudes and beliefs about breast cancer screening and, ultimately, increase their use of mammography. The project responds to compelling evidence that Haitian women are more likely to die from breast cancer than are their white counterparts.

The 15-minute Haitian Creole video uses the expertise of Haitian American physicians at Boston University Medical Center to create a culturally appropriate discussion of barriers to breast cancer screening in the community.

The video will be evaluated at the Mattapan Community Health Center in 6 to 10 educational sessions with low-income Haitian women aged 50 and older who have low screening rates. Each session will include approximately 10 women and will be led by a registered nurse fluent in Haitian Creole. Following its evaluation, the video will be distributed by the American Cancer Society and used in Haitian American physician offices in Boston and other areas with Haitian American populations such as New York and Florida. In addition, HAPHI plans to include this video in its local cable television programming and promote it to Haitian American local access cable outlets nationwide.

Indiana University

Continenence Care Center. Through the Indiana University CoE's Continenence Care Center, many women with urinary incontinence are finding that treatment options are available to them. Approximately 40 women are referred to the center each month and evaluated by one of two women's health nurse practitioners. Depending on the patient, further referrals are made to Dr. Paul Schoon, a urogynecologist, or to Dr. Greg Wahle, a urologist, for medical or surgical therapy. Therapies include fluid and dietary management, pelvic floor strengthening exercises, relaxation exercises, bladder training, biofeedback, electrical stimulation, and medication. The Center is open to patients twice a week and is growing rapidly.

Cancer Support Group. The Indiana University CoE is partnering with local organizations to operate a support group for individuals with cancer and their family members. Led by Pam Conrad, a registered nurse trained in psychology, this weekly group gives patients ongoing support and access to numerous resources. For example, The Little Red Door, a community cancer support organization, provides rides to those who lack reliable transportation and free wigs to those who need them. The Wellness Community, a non-profit group for cancer patients fighting for recovery, worked closely with the CoE to establish this highly successful support group that sees approximately 40 people each month. Currently, plans are underway to renew funding to continue the support group through 2001.

University of Puerto Rico

Puerto Rico/U.S. Virgin Islands Women's Health Information Alliance. The University of Puerto Rico CoE is involved in the development of an alliance between Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands to bring Caribbean women's health issues to the forefront. The alliance is sponsored by the University of Puerto Rico Women's Health Information Network of Atlantea, a university initiative for academic collaboration in the Caribbean. In June 1999, the CoE convened a workshop of University of Puerto Rico faculty members, government representatives, and colleagues from the U.S. Virgin Islands to establish areas of common interest. Participants agreed that the alliance should focus on working toward a common women's health agenda, collaborating with organizations that focus on women's issues, integrating services to better utilize available resources, and developing information systems and distance learning for continuing education and training.

The alliance's short-term goals are to identify funding sources, develop a concept paper or a project that responds to common themes, develop a Web site, and identify individuals and organizations working in women's health issues. Long-term goals include using distance

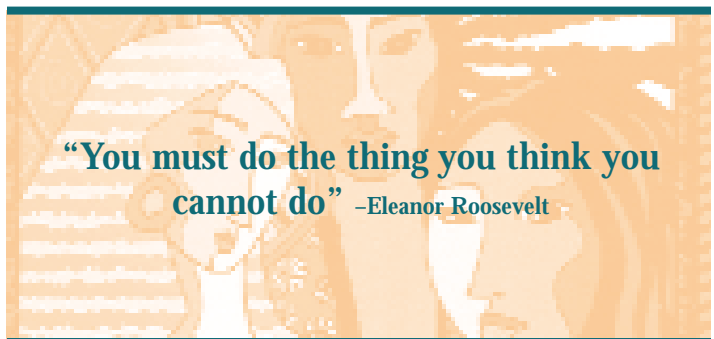
learning for continuing education and training, sponsoring a Caribbean Women's Health Conference, and developing a database on Caribbean women's health.

In December 1999, Delia Camacho, Ph.D., CoE Director, presented the vision of the alliance at the Virgin Islands' Alliance for Primary Care Annual Meeting: Virgin Islands Healthy Start Initiative, 1999–2000 in St. Thomas. A task force was formed to develop a working agenda in February 2000, and the alliance plans to reconvene in May.

Domestic Violence. Domestic violence is an important social, legal, and public health concern in Puerto Rico. To address the health aspects of this problem, the University of Puerto Rico CoE has joined forces with a number of academic health centers and government, advocacy, and nongovernment organizations. The first priority of this alliance is to educate health providers in the identification of domestic violence victims. To address this issue, the CoE sponsored a seminar on December 8, 1999, to promote the use of the Puerto Rico Department of Health protocol for identifying domestic violence victims.

The CoE also sponsored, in collaboration with alliance members and the Physicians for Social Responsibility Organization of Philadelphia, a comprehensive domestic violence training program for health care providers in February 2000. As a result of the program, 45 health professionals received training. The alliance will follow up with the trained participants and offer support to ensure prospective training of other health professionals. The training coincided with a 1-day forum that commemorated the 20th anniversary of Casa Protegida Julia de Burgos, a local community organization that runs two women's shelters. The forum offered workshops on the history of women's movements and domestic violence, history of women's shelters in Puerto Rico, violence and human rights, violence and women's health policies, and survivor intervention. Both the anniversary forum and the training offered continuing medical education credits for physicians and other health professionals.

CoE Innovations continued on page 4



University of Wisconsin, Madison

Women's Health and Aging: Research and Leadership Training Program. The National Institute on Aging's Women's Health and Aging: Research and Leadership Training Program grant supports fellows who work in collaboration with the University of Wisconsin CoE. The grant supports two trainees in the first year and two M.D. and two Ph.D. postdoctoral research fellows in subsequent years. An American Board of Internal Medicine Research Pathway is available for internal medicine residents who are interested in an academic career in women's health research. The fellows are affiliated with the CoE and work collaboratively on activities.

Applicants select mentors from research faculty in clinical, epidemiological, or basic biological research and work with them in the traditional apprentice training model. In addition, a leadership core of senior women faculty is available for mentoring, role modeling, and career advice. CoE Director Molly Carnes, M.D., is the principal investigator of this program, and the co-investigators are Linda Schuler, V.M.D., Ph.D., in the department of comparative biosciences in the School of Veterinary Medicine, and Terry Young, Ph.D. in the department of preventive medicine in the Medical School. The program places a special emphasis on recruiting and training individuals from racial and ethnic minority groups who are currently underrepresented as investigators setting the women's health research agenda.

In addition to conducting research, fellows participate in core activities including a monthly interdisciplinary Women's Health Research Colloquium coordinated by the University of Wisconsin CoE, a monthly Women's Health Forum, an annual retreat on the responsible conduct of research, and regular meetings with the program directors. Additional training activities, such as coursework, are individualized with the goal of preparing the fellows to become independent investigators and future faculty

members at academic institutions. The new fellows are Dr. Terri Gomez, who is studying the biology of obesity, and Dr. Kimberly Price, who is investigating gender differences on the impact of birth weight in the development of diabetes. Dr. Jennifer Brockman, who studied the role of endogenous prolactin in the development of breast cancer, rotated off the grant in October.

Tulane University and Xavier University of Louisiana

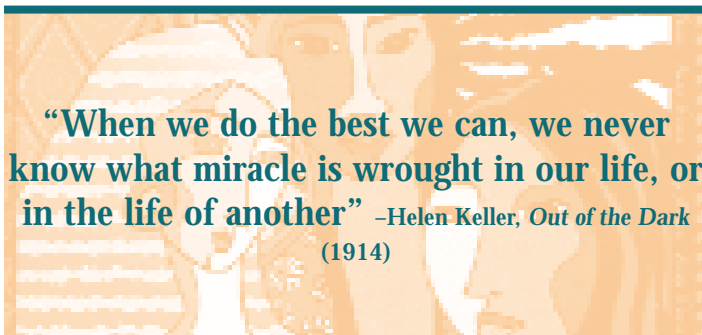
Pink Ribbon Campaign. During Breast Cancer Awareness Month in October, the Tulane Xavier CoE partnered with Wal Mart Pharmacy to increase awareness among women in the greater New Orleans area about the importance of early detection of breast cancer. The CoE provided Wal Mart with instruction cards for breast self-examinations (BSE) to give to women picking up prescriptions at the pharmacy. The cards included a coupon for a discounted mammogram screening at Tulane University Hospital and Clinic and a pink ribbon pin.

In an effort not to exclude younger women, the CoE developed a "Teen Screen" program to educate and increase breast health awareness among teens. The program promotes healthy behaviors such as BSE and dispels myths that many young women may have regarding their breasts. The program is being offered to area high schools, churches, and girls clubs.

As a result of their breast cancer awareness programs, the Tulane Xavier CoE was successful in reaching more than 350 women in the greater New Orleans area from October to December 1999.

HeartFest! A Cardiology Workshop for Women.

The Tulane Xavier CoE's HeartFest! program is designed to educate women about their heart disease risk and to promote healthy behaviors. Participants have an option to attend three concurrent sessions and return for a heart-healthy lunch. The program offers free cholesterol, blood pressure, and height and weight screenings. A health risk appraisal is also included in the process. With 100-140 participants at each program, HeartFest! has a waiting list of women who wish to attend. The program led to the creation of a "Garden for Women" in New Orleans' City Park as a memorial to women who have died from heart disease and stroke.



University of Michigan CoE Takes Part in Mind-Body Research

The University of Michigan Complementary and Alternative Medicine Research Center (CAMRC) is one of five centers to receive funding from the National Institutes of Health (NIH) to study mind-body interactions and health. The NIH awarded \$10 million in 1999 to support research that seeks to understand how beliefs, attitudes, values, and stress affect physical and mental health.

Numerous studies have documented that psychological stress is linked to a variety of health outcomes such as heart disease and immune system functioning. The research supported by the mind-body centers will lead to a better understanding of the nature of this relationship, including the underlying biological and psychosocial mechanisms.

The University of Michigan's research will focus on the mind-body connection and the use of alternative therapies related to cardiovascular health and illness. They are currently recruiting women for participation in three clinical trials that will study two ancient Eastern healing practices, Reiki and Qigong, and the herb Hawthorn. In addition, the CAMRC is partnering with the University of Michigan National Center of Excellence in Women's Health (CoE) to present a lecture series on women and alternative medicine and the mind-body connection.

The other mind-body research centers are located at the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center and Carnegie Mellon in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; University of Wisconsin in Madison, Wisconsin (a CoE); University of Miami in Coral Gables, Florida; and the Ohio State University in Columbus, Ohio (a CoE).

"These new research centers represent innovations in the integration of behavioral, social, and biomedical research. It is hoped that the findings they produce will accelerate our understanding of mind-body interactions and lead to more effective approaches for the treatment and prevention of disease," said Dr. Norman Anderson, Director of the NIH Office of Behavioral and Social Sciences Research (OBSSR).

The NIH OBSSR leads the effort to develop this mind-body initiative. Twelve NIH institutes cosponsor the initiative, and five institutes—the National Cancer Institute (NCI), the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI), the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD), the National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research (NIDCR), and the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH)—support the five new centers.

Wake Forest Researchers Study Effects of Ginkgo on Memory Loss

Wake Forest University School of Medicine researchers, who are affiliated with the Wake Forest National Center of Excellence in Women's Health (CoE), are studying the effectiveness of ginkgo biloba in preventing dementia in older adults. This multicenter study is funded by the National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine (NCCAM) in collaboration with the National Institute on Aging (NIA), two components of the National Institutes of Health (NIH).

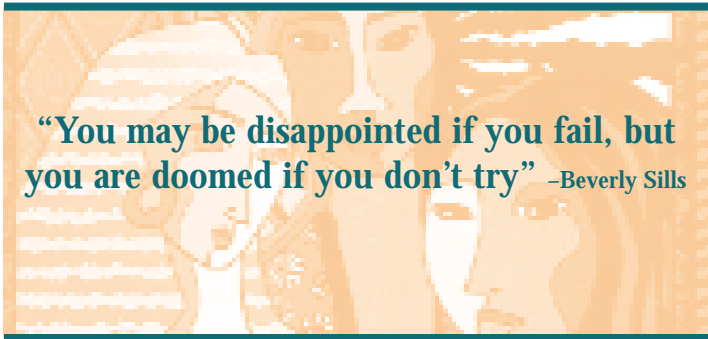
Wake Forest is studying ginkgo biloba along with three other clinical centers including

the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine; Johns Hopkins School of Medicine, department of radiology; and the University of California, Davis. The University of Pittsburgh is coordinating this 6-year effort, and the University of Washington in Seattle is coordinating the data collection and analysis of the four study sites.

"These centers will test the efficacy, safety, and tolerability of an extract of ginkgo biloba in preventing dementia in aging individuals. Our goal is to advance scientific knowledge about this substance's effectiveness in preventing dementia and improving quality of life," said William R. Harlan, M.D., then acting director of NCCAM.

The 6-year study will enroll a total of 2,000 participants, who will be randomly assigned to one of two groups. Study participants will either receive 240 mg. of ginkgo biloba or be given a placebo. The majority of study participants will be recruited from current Cardiovascular Health Study (CHS) participants, an ongoing observational study of cardiovascular disease in adults over the age of 65. The CHS participants are being recruited for the ginkgo trial because they have been tested for cognitive function and memory loss since the study began in 1989. The CoE is facilitating the recruitment of women for the trial.

The primary outcome of this study will be the onset of any type of dementia. The secondary outcome will be measured by changes in cognitive function. Research results will be disseminated through the CoE.



"You may be disappointed if you fail, but you are doomed if you don't try" —Beverly Sills



Resources

CoE CONTACT INFORMATION:

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(617) 264-5210 (FAX)
<http://www.hmcnet.harvard.edu/coe/>

Indiana University
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Indiana Cancer Pavilion
535 Barnhill Drive, RT-150
Indianapolis, IN 46202
(317) 274-2754
(317) 274-2785 (FAX)
<http://www.iupui.edu/~womenhlt/>

Magee Women's Research Institute
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Reproductive Sciences
204 Craft Avenue
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<http://www.magee.edu/cewh2.htm>

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(215) 843-7946 (FAX)
<http://www.auhs.edu/institutes/iwh/coe.html>

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University of Wisconsin, Madison
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PO Box 208091
Women's Health Program
Dana Clinic Building Room 013D
New Haven, CT 06520-8025
(203) 737-5820
(203) 737-5822 (FAX)
<http://info.med.yale.edu/womenshealth/>

For additional women's health information and resources:

National Women's Health Information Center
Office on Women's Health
Department of Health and Human Services
Washington, D.C.
800-994-WOMAN
888-220-5446 (TDD)
<http://www.4woman.gov/>

CoE Home Page:
<http://www.4woman.gov/owh/coe>



Hats Off to You!

The National Centers of Excellence continue to receive recognition for their outstanding achievements in women's health. Below are a few of the awards and honors that the Centers have earned.

Harvard Medical School

Women's Health became the 10th curricular theme in the Harvard Medical School curriculum as a result of the CoE's efforts.

Indiana University

The governor of Indiana, Frank O'Bannon, proclaimed September Women's Health Month at a formal ceremony at the statehouse rotunda. The proclamation, presented to CoE Director Rose Fife, M.D., notes that, "...the Office of Women's Health [of the Indiana State Department of Health], the National Center of Excellence in Women's Health, and the Indiana Commission for Women offer statewide leadership to make women more aware of health problems and solutions and to provide better access to health services..."

MCP Hahnemann University

Along with individuals such as Katie Couric, Lila Wallis, M.D., and Betty Rollin, MCP Hahnemann's Sandra Levison, M.D., was saluted as a 1999 Reader's Digest Women's Health Hero for her work in making women's health education a top priority.

Page Morahan, Ph.D., on behalf of the Hedwig van Ameringen Executive Leadership in Academic Medicine (ELAM) Program for Women, received The Network 1999 Annual Leadership Award of the American Council on Education Office of Women in Higher Education and National Network of Women Leaders.

Rosalyn Richman and Page Morahan, Ph.D., co-directors of MCP Hahnemann's ELAM Program for Women, contributed to the Leadership and Equity section of the December 6, 1999, issue of Medical and Health Perspectives. This issue focused on "Centers of Excellence Promote Expanding Women's Health Agenda."

The CoE's Women's Health Education Program received an award from the U.S. Department of Education's Fund for the Improvement of Post-Secondary Education (FIPSE). This grant will allow the Women's Health Education Program to mentor other medical institutions as they develop their own women's health education programs and curricula.

Tulane University and Xavier University of Louisiana
In September 1999, the sculpture "Contemplation" by Cecile Weil Usdin (1925-1999) was given to the Tulane Xavier CoE. The piece was donated by her husband, Gene Usdin, M.D., in memory of his wife. Ms. Usdin, a strong advocate for women's rights, was a professional artist whose sculptures are on display at the American Psychiatric Association headquarters in Washington, D.C., the Isidore Newman School, Touro Infirmary, and the Woldenberg Center. The Tulane Xavier CoE is proud to have this important piece of artwork on display.

University of Michigan

The Spirit of Women Foundation awarded the University of Michigan CoE a \$10,000 grant to support the CoE's goals of increasing cultural competency among community providers of health care and other women's services. The CoE will conduct a series of intense, 1-day, prejudice-reduction workshops that will help participants overcome stereotypes and work together to improve their services to women.

The CoE also received a \$50,000 matching grant from the Edyth Bush Foundation to expand the community outreach and educational programming of the Women's Health Resource Center.

University of Pennsylvania

Michelle Battistini, M.D., director, Penn Health for Women, was named the Sylvan Eisman Outstanding Primary Care Physician for 1999. Dr. Battistini has also gained tremendous international attention for her efforts to bring professors from Japan and Israel to the University of Pennsylvania to learn more about Penn Health for Women.

University of Puerto Rico

The Department of Health and Human Services' Title V officials commended the CoE for its initiatives and programs on their visit to the School of Public Health in March 1999.

CoE Director Delia Camacho, Ph.D., was invited as a visiting professor to Yale University in March 1999 to speak to several audiences about international women's health issues.

University of Washington, Seattle

In November 1999, Harborview Medical Center received formal notification of its award of "special designation of commendation" for the second consecutive time by the Joint Commission on the Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations (JCAHO). Harborview received a near-perfect score of 96 percent, compared with a national mean score of 88 percent. The women's clinic at the Harborview Medical Center is a designated CoE.

CoE Awards continued on page 8

**Office on Women's Health
Department of Health and Human Services**

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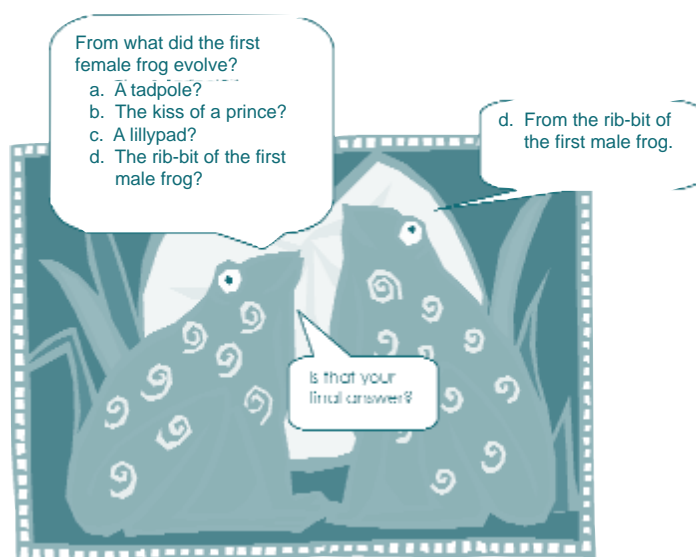
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CoE Awards continued from page 7

Wake Forest University Baptist Medical Center CoE physicians and researchers appeared on *The Whole Woman* television program throughout January to discuss women's health issues. Dr. J. Mac Ernest, associate professor of obstetrics and gynecology, discussed the importance of preparing for pregnancy. Drs. Ernest, Sally Shumaker, professor of public health sciences and CoE Director, and David Herrington, associate professor of internal medicine-cardiology and associate director of the CoE, discussed gender differences in providing medical care. *The Whole Woman* is produced by The Health Network, a national cable television channel.



Game Show Frogs

We'd Like to Hear from You

We welcome your input. If you have suggestions or comments on *Models for the Nation*, or if you would like to be placed on the mailing list to receive future issues, please contact Gabrielle Wilson at 301-984-7191 or gwilson@matthewsgroup.com.



NATIONAL CENTERS OF
EXCELLENCE
IN WOMEN'S HEALTH