

Women's Health Research: Looking to the Future

The Office of Research on Women's Health recently sponsored a meeting titled "Looking to the Future" to discuss major paths of women's health and sex/gender research and career development for women scientists that ORWH and NIH should pursue in the coming years. More than 90 representatives of institutes and centers, extramural research institutions, interdisciplinary research programs, professional societies and advocacy organizations attended.

Dr. Vivian Pinn, ORWH director, invited wide-ranging input: "There is no predetermined outcome—we



ORWH director Dr. Vivian Pinn

want to hear from

the constituents of women's health research about the directions they believe should be taken in the future."

Attendees praised ORWH for its 14-year history of "collaboration, outreach and a vision for research across the life span of women" and urged that these hallmarks of its approach continue in the future. A brief overview of a formal evaluation of ORWH's first 10 years set the stage for the discussion. Among the highlights were an increase of 143 percent in the number of RFAs and PAs addressing women's health issues, a 48 percent increase in research project grant



Dr. Gerson Weiss


(RPG) applications involving women's health research, and substantial increases in the number of RPG and F32 fellowship applications submitted by women and awards to women.

Over the years, ORWH has expanded the concept of women's health research to distinguish sex (biological) and gender (self-concept and societal) factors, as recommended by an Institute of Medicine report, *Exploring the Biological Contribution to Human Health: Does Sex Matter?* Attendees

suggested that more research be conducted with comparative data analyses for women and men to determine the effects of sex and gender factors on health and disease.

Other approaches included expanding interdisciplinary research to encourage more collaboration with fields such as engineering, physics and the behavioral and social sciences; considering public/private research collaboration; and developing international research and treatment programs.

Multiple career issues persist for women in biomedical research that require expanded efforts in the future, according to several attendees. The increased enrollments of women in medical institutions can obscure the fact that the ceiling is still low for women in the academic environment for faculty positions and advancements. Also, Dr. Gerson Weiss, chair of the department of OB/GYN at New Jersey Medical School, pointed out that, of those who begin in research, "many do not continue and many are lost, especially women and minorities." He said that mentors are needed at all levels of entry and advancement, and training for women and minorities is needed in such practical matters as how to negotiate a contract and how to combine personal and professional roles.

Dr. Leslie Wolfe, president of the Center for Women Policy Studies, pointed out the importance not only of research but also of ORWH itself: "Essential to creating these new research opportunities is advocacy for sustaining and even enhancing the NIH and ORWH ability to support them." Women's health advocates indicated that many in Congress think "the job is done" because they are beginning to hear about results. Attendees suggested that advocates enhance their organizational partnerships in order to become more active in appealing for continuing support of women's health research.—Barbara S. Lynch 

All Beethoven's Quartets in Concerts

The FAES Chamber Music Series presents the Auryn Quartet performing all of Beethoven's Quartets on the following dates:

Saturday, Mar. 5 at 8 p.m.
 Sunday, Mar. 6 at 4 p.m.
 Saturday, Mar. 12 at 4 p.m.
 Sunday, Mar. 13 at 4 p.m.
 Saturday, Mar. 19 at 8 p.m.
 Sunday, Mar. 20 at 4 p.m.

All performances are at the Landon School's Mondzac Performing Arts Center, located at 6101 Wilson Lane in Bethesda. Tickets may be purchased at the door or in advance (in Bldg. 60, Suite 230, or the FAES Bookstore in Bldg. 10, Rm. B1L101). Individual tickets are \$25; students, postdocs, pre-IRTAS and fellows pay \$10. 