

WHMC NEWSLETTER

JAN
2025



About Us!

The Women's Health Multidisciplinary Consortium is a student led organization here at UNC.

Our mission is to create a trainee-focused, unified community of faculty, clinicians, and researchers with a vested interest in women's health research and sex-specific pathologies.

Upcoming Events

17
Jan

Volunteer with NC Diaper Bank 9:30 AM

17
Jan

1st Core Committee Meeting 3:00 PM

30
Jan

Meet the Carolina Women's Center! 12:30 PM

TBD
Jan

Hot Topic: Gynecologic Pain TBD

28
Feb

Volunteer with NC Diaper Bank 9:30 AM

See
flyer
next

Hot Off the Press!

Ovarian cancer vaccine funding

Professor Ahmed Ahmed's lab in the UK received £600,000 this October to begin development of a vaccine targeting early stage ovarian cancer, a cancer which as of now has no screening. The lab will be using mini models called organoids, and working off of the findings that "immune cells from ovarian cancer patients 'remember' the tumour."

Ovarian Cancer affects 325,000 people worldwide, and current recommendation for those with high risk BRCA1 mutations is ovarian removal by age 35.

Funding for vaccine development is a great step towards disease prevention.

[Click here to read more.](#)

Congratulations to our new WHMC members, we're looking forward to a great year full of growth!

THE WOMEN'S HEALTH MULTIDISCIPLINARY
CONSORTIUM INVITES YOU TO



MEET THE



CAROLINA WOMEN'S CENTER

1.30.2025
12:30 PM

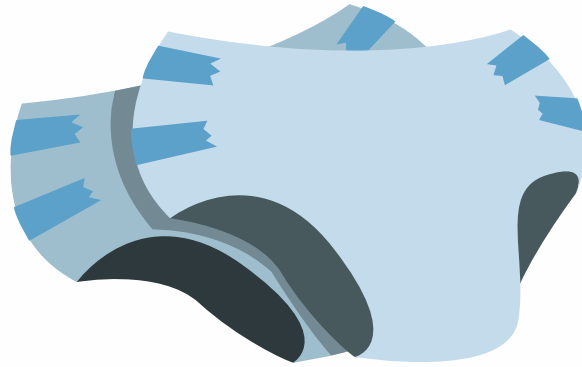
Roper Hall 6302



Learn about the
CWC & their
upcoming
"Lunch & Learn"
series where
medical and
graduate students
are able to
present!

CO-SPONSORED BY THE GRADUATE AND PROFESSIONAL STUDENT GOVERNMENT

HOSTED BY WHMC & FMIG:



LOOKING FOR NC DIAPER BANK VOLUNTEERS

**Come help package diapers, period products,
and incontinence wear at the NC Diaper Bank!**

JAN 17 | 9:30 AM - 11:30 AM
437 DIMMOCKS MILL RD, SUITE 1,
HILLSBOROUGH, NC 27278

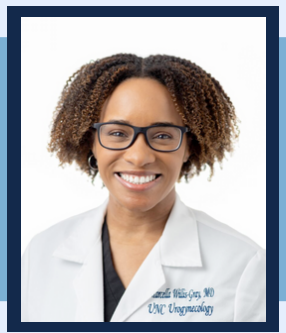
SIGN UP HERE



[HTTPS://GO.UNC.EDU/B4DBE](https://go.unc.edu/B4DBE)

MEMBER INTERVIEW:

DR. MARCELLA WILLIS-GRAY



Could you tell us briefly about your background and how it shaped your academic interests?

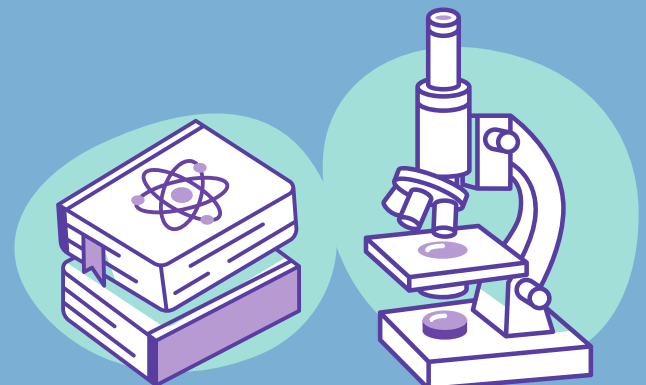
I was born in Texas and raised in Virginia. I earned my Bachelor's Degree in Biology at Xavier University of Louisiana in New Orleans. From there, I was able to return to my home state and attend medical school at the University of Virginia. While doing my 3rd-year clinical rotations, I fell in love with reproductive health and went on to match in Obstetrics and Gynecology at Duke. My love of surgery and anatomy grew during my four years of residency, and I decided to pursue a fellowship in Urogynecology and Reconstructive Pelvic Surgery. This brought me to UNC, and after 3 years of fellowship training, I joined as faculty. Reflecting on my education and training path, I was extremely fortunate to train at strong academic hospitals with diverse patient populations and incredible mentorship.

What research or other work in women's health are you involved in currently?

I currently serve as the Director of the urogynecology and Reconstructive Pelvic Surgery Division in the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology. I am also the Course Director for the Reproductive and Genitourinary Health Course for the Foundation Phase. My research interests include surgical outcomes and education.

Who inspires you academically or otherwise?

I am inspired every day by my colleagues, trainees, and students. Their commitment to patient care and education is unmatched.





**Sneha
Adayapalam**



**Ella
Brose**



**Kayla
Bruce**



**Katie
Characklis**



**Siri
Dommata**



**Raeanne
Geffert**



**Jessica
Gingles**



**Suchetana
Kona**



**Colleen
Lake**



**Sofia
Malave Ortiz**

Welcome New **WHMC Members**

We are excited to see the amazing things you can accomplish!



**Isurika
Weerasinghe**



**Sofia
Shwartz**



**Cordelia
Muir**



**Emily
Perou**



**Celeste
Robles**



**Elizabeth
Sajan**



**Mehnaz
Shafquat**



**Clare
Stull**



**Sanjita
Suryadevara**



**Kavya
Balasubramanian**



**Maggie
DeMonia**



**Sara
Pacini**

COMMUNITY BULLETIN BOARD



December's Hot

Topic Seminar featured

presentations by Dr. Lauren Klein, and Dr. Erica Sparkenbaugh, focusing on sickle cell disease and pregnancy. Some interesting highlights from their presentations included disparities in treatment for pregnant patients, disease processes on placenta vascularity, and how a multidisciplinary team reduced mortality during childbirth by 15x.

Winter break meant getting together for some cozy cafe drinks at Lanza's in Carrboro before splitting ways for the holidays. It was a lovely way to hang out with all of you, plus the peppermint hot chocolate was to die for. **Make sure to join us for our next social hour!**



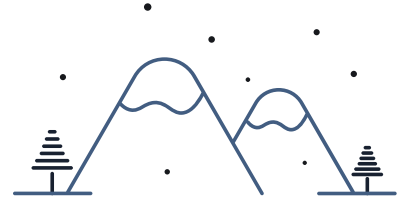
Let us know if you have research you would like us to promote!

MONTHLY CALENDAR



UNC
SCHOOL OF MEDICINE

JAN 2025



SUN

MON

TUE

WED

THU

FRI

SAT

Happy Back to School!
Watch this space for new
WHMC events this Spring!

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17 Volunteer at
NC Diaper Bank,
9:30 AM

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23

1st Core Committee
Meeting, 3:00

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30 Meet the
Carolina
Women's Center
12:30pm | Roper

31



Welcome Back Students!





SCANS SHOW BRAIN REORGANIZATION DURING PREGNANCY

Women's Health Fun Fact

Researchers at UC Irvine sequentially scanned a colleague's brain at 26 time points from before IVF conception to two years after birth, and published findings in an open-access resource. Findings included observations of **gray matter volume and thickness decrease, white matter increase, ventricular enlargement, and greater amounts of cerebrospinal fluid**, with correlation of this reorganization to estradiol and progesterone concentrations. Some changes returned to baseline, while others remained after the two years. So far the research is limited to only one patient, so it is difficult to generalize, however it is the first of its kind to look into brain structure throughout pregnancy, and may lead to findings for preeclampsia, postpartum depression, multiple sclerosis, and migraines

Pritschet, L., Taylor, C.M., Cossio, D. et al. Neuroanatomical changes observed over the course of a human pregnancy. *Nat Neurosci* 27, 2253–2260 (2024). <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41593-024-01741-0>

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

<https://forms.gle/rhHNIKqXJoMbVxTJ9>

It's your WHMC
communication
engagement team
here!

We're looking for your submissions! This is a space for a community bulletin – a place to look for research or work positions, fill professional needs, submit shoutouts, and submit photos to be used in future newsletters!

Kate Aberman



Sarah Rebbeor



Kylie Hutchison



Share the WHMC
listserv with others:



And visit our
website [here](#)