

NEWSLETTER



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.

Hot Off the Press!

A study from the University of Michigan has found that self-sampling for HPV screening is just as effective as traditional speculum-based exams. HPV is linked to over 99% of cervical cancers, and self-sampling provides a more comfortable and accessible alternative, especially for those with physical disabilities.

While the FDA approved self-swabbing for HPV in 2024, current practice has been slow to change. The study demonstrated that vaginal swabs can detect HPV with similar accuracy to speculum exams, which could improve participation in screening. This method is already used in countries like Sweden and Australia, and the researchers are advocating for its adoption in the U.S. to enhance screening rates and comfort.

[Science Daily Article, Paper](#)

Upcoming Events

5
Mar

SOLE Fest

11:00- 1:00 PM

See flyers
for more
info!

17
Mar

WHMC St. Patrick's
Day Bake Sale

11:00-1:30PM

27
Mar

Merrimon Lecture: Women's
Health Research

12:00-1:00PM

28
Mar

NC Diaper Bank
volunteering

9:30-11:30 AM

30
Mar

WHMC Bolin Creek
Walk to Cafe Driade

11:00 AM

ARE YOU INTERESTED IN WOMEN'S HEALTH?

JOIN THE

WOMEN'S HEALTH MULTIDISCIPLINARY CONSORTIUM

AT **S.O.L.E. Fest**

*WEDNESDAY, MARCH 5TH, 11AM - 1PM
GREAT HALL, CAROLINA UNION*

The purpose of the Women's Health Multidisciplinary Consortium (WHMC) is to create a trainee-focused multidisciplinary community with a vested interest in advancing the health of women and create opportunities to train the next generation.





Raleigh

STAND UP FOR SCIENCE 2025

MARCH 7, 2025
Halifax Mall

12-4 PM

Speakers: 12:30-2pm

General Rally: 2-4pm

SCIENCE IS
FOR
EVERYONE

Find your local rally site and
other ways to get involved:
standupforscience2025.org



ST PATRICK'S DAY BAKE SALE

UNC WHMC

MARCH 17

11 AM - 1:30 PM

SWEETENING
THE FUTURE OF
WOMEN'S
HEALTH!

BETWEEN BEACH CAFE
AND BONDURANT HALL



**HUGE
SALE**

Table Talk: Graduate Research



“Ethical Considerations
of Prenatal Gene Editing
in Neurodevelopmental
Disease”

Rami Major

Postdoctoral Research Associate
Center for Bioethics
Department of Social Medicine



Thursday, March 6
12:30 - 1:30 pm
at the CWC

Presentation followed by Q&A
Bring your lunch and a friend or colleague!

Table Talk: Graduate Research



“Poca Madre:
Representations of
Mother(ing) in
Contemporary Mexican
and Chicana Narratives”

Katelyn Smith

PhD Candidate
Department of Romance Studies



Thursday, March 20
12:30 - 1:30 pm
at the CWC

Presentation followed by Q&A
Bring your lunch and a friend or colleague!

Women's Health Research: Transforming Science, Advancing Clinical Care, Ensuring Momentum

The 2024-25 Merrimon Lecture

Thursday, March 27, 2025

12:00 PM - 1:00 PM ET

4008 Old Clinic Auditorium or via Zoom

Individuals attending the event will be offered lunch.

Please ensure that you scan the QR code or navigate to <https://go.unc.edu/Merrimon2025> to register and obtain further information regarding the lecture.



Carolyn M. Mazure, PhD

Norma Weinberg Spungen and Joan Lebson Bildner Professor in Women's Health Research and Professor of Psychiatry and of Psychology Yale School of Medicine



Sponsor and co-sponsors

UNC Center for Bioethics, sponsor

UNC Center for Health Equity Research, co-sponsor

Department of Medicine, co-sponsor

Department of Social Medicine, co-sponsor

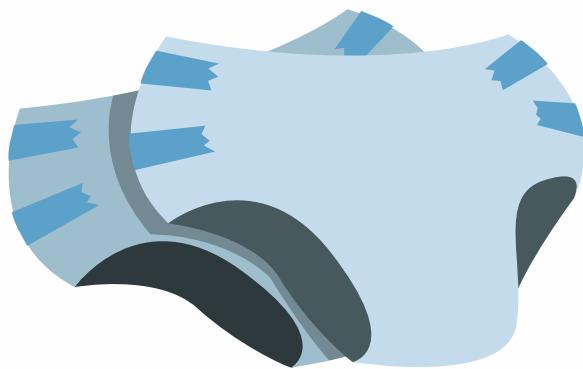
School of Medicine Merrimon Lectureship, co-sponsor

Getty Image



SCHOOL OF
MEDICINE

HOSTED BY WHMC & FAMILY MEDICINE INTEREST GROUP:



LOOKING FOR NC DIAPER BANK VOLUNTEERS

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

MARCH 28 | 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)

Bolin Creek Stroll

Sunday, March 30th at 11:00 AM

Come meet the WMHC for a walk from Community Center Park to Cafe Driade!

Let us know you're coming:



FACULTY INTERVIEW: ERICA SPARKENBAUGH, PHD AFFILIATED FACULTY

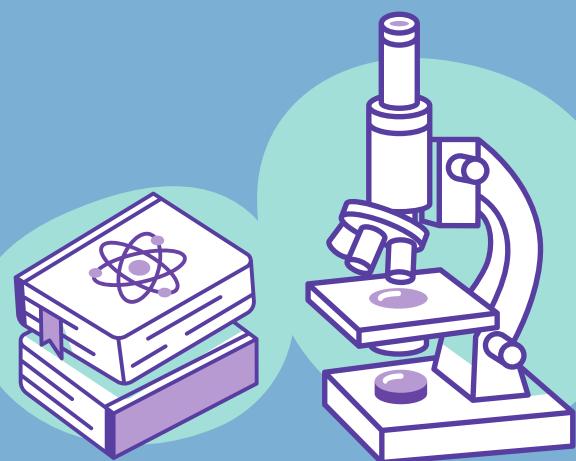


Could you tell us briefly about your background and how it shaped your academic interests?

I was a curious and busy kid—my parents joke that my first word was 'Why?' Growing up in a blue-collar family in western Pennsylvania, I was lucky to have parents who nurtured my curiosity. They took me to libraries, science museums, and even bought me chemistry sets (though I quickly learned you can't make shampoo from a Chem500 kit—just a big mess).

In high school, my dad never quite understood my love for studying, but I thrived on deep dives into new topics. I knew I wanted to study biology in college, though at the time, medicine was the only science career I knew. That changed when I had to complete a research capstone project—

I was hooked! A summer research fellowship studying herbal supplements and mammary tumor growth solidified my passion for women's health research. I went on to earn my PhD in pharmacology and toxicology, focusing on drug-induced liver injury, and later completed a postdoc at UNC Chapel Hill researching blood clotting and sickle cell disease. When I started my own lab in 2019, I knew I wanted to bring my focus back to women's health, making it a priority in my research.



INTERVIEW, CONTINUED

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

I remain deeply committed to sickle cell disease research. Although the disease stems from a single mutation in the hemoglobin gene, it has profound effects on red blood cells and the vasculature. Unfortunately, this impacts every stage of a woman's reproductive life—leading to delayed puberty and menarche, infertility, pregnancy complications, and early menopause.

Our lab is currently focused on understanding and improving pregnancy outcomes for women with sickle cell disease.

We use a combination of approaches, including a mouse model of the disease, *in vitro* cell culture techniques, and clinical collaborations with the Adult Sickle Cell Clinic at UNC.

By integrating basic and translational research, we aim to improve outcomes for both mothers and their babies.

Who inspires you academically or otherwise?

My graduate advisors, Bob Roth and Patricia Ganey, are both phenomenal scientists and role models who exemplify scientific integrity and grace. Their mentorship deeply shaped my approach to research and leadership.

Beyond academia, my parents are a huge inspiration. They are two of the smartest and hardest-working people I know. Neither went to college, but they instilled in me a love of learning, critical thinking, and curiosity.

My paternal grandparents also had a profound impact on me. They were deeply involved in their community, and I often tagged along on Meals on Wheels deliveries and highway cleanup events. Their dedication to service shaped my own values, and I strive to pass that forward—coaching my kids' sports teams, volunteering at their schools, and supporting PORCH whenever my schedule allows.

MONTHLY CALENDAR



MARCH 2025

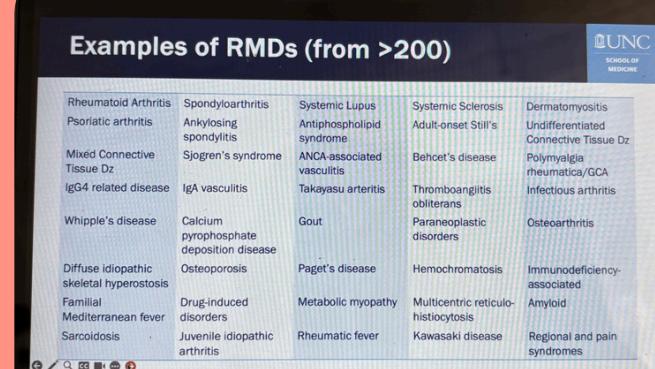
SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
					A purple square graphic with white text that reads "WOMEN'S RIGHTS ARE HUMAN RIGHTS" in a vertical orientation, with small orange diamond shapes around the text.	1
2	3	4	A blue irregular shape graphic with white text that reads "SOLE Fest".	A purple irregular shape graphic with white text that reads "CWC Grad Table Talk".	A red circle graphic with white text that reads "Stand Up for Science Rally".	A pink cloud-like graphic with white text that reads "International Women's Day".
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	A green circle graphic with white text that reads "WHMC Bake Sale!".	18	19	A purple irregular shape graphic with white text that reads "CWC Grad Table Talk".	21	22
23	A yellow and pink irregular shape graphic with white text that reads "WHMC Social!".	24	25	26	A green starburst graphic with white text that reads "Merrimon Lecture: Women's Health Research".	28
30	31				A red irregular shape graphic with white text that reads "NC Diaper Bank volunteering".	29

Happy Women's History Month
& Gender Equality Month!

COMMUNITY BULLETIN BOARD



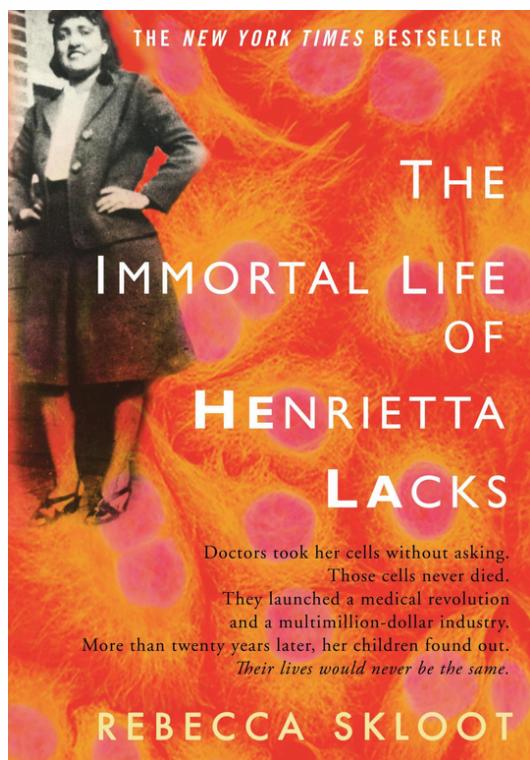
North Carolina Diaper Bank
Volunteering with WHMC!



Examples of RMDs (from >200)

Rheumatoid Arthritis	Spondyloarthritis	Systemic Lupus	Systemic Sclerosis	Dermatomyositis
Psoriatic arthritis	Ankylosing spondylitis	Antiphospholipid syndrome	Adult-onset Still's disease	Undifferentiated Connective Tissue Dz
Mixed Connective Tissue Dz	Sjögren's syndrome	ANCA-associated vasculitis	Behcet's disease	Polymyositis/ rheumatica/ GCA
IgG4 related disease	IgA vasculitis	Takayasu arteritis	Thromboangiitis obliterans	Infectious arthritis
Whipple's disease	Calcium pyrophosphate deposition disease	Gout	Paraneoplastic disorders	Osteoarthritis
Diffuse idiopathic skeletal hyperostosis	Osteoporosis	Psoriasis	Hemochromatosis	Immunodeficiency-associated
Familial Mediterranean fever	Drug-induced disorders	Metabolic myopathy	Multicentric reticulo-histiocytosis	Amyloid
Sarcoidosis	Juvenile idiopathic arthritis	Rheumatic fever	Kawasaki disease	Regional and pain syndromes

WHMC's February Virtual HTS
"A Joint Effort: Arthritis in Women"



WHMC BOOK RECOMMENDATION OF THE MONTH

Henrietta Lacks by Rebecca Skloot

This book tells the story of an African-American woman who died in 1951 at 31 of an aggressive cervical cancer. It also tells the story of her legacy: the HeLa cell line. This cell line was taken from her tumor without her consent and successfully cultured in a lab. After her death, HeLa was mass-produced and sold to laboratories all over the world, leading to significant scientific advances, but her family never saw any compensation. This book highlights the impact of ethical issues in research and clinical care in the past and relevance to the present!



FEMALE SHARKS CAN REPRODUCE INDEPENDENTLY OF A MALE SHARK

Fact
or
Fiction?

A baby swell shark named Yoko was born at the Shreveport Aquarium in Louisiana, despite the absence of male sharks in the tank for over three years. This rare birth could be due to parthenogenesis, a form of asexual reproduction where the egg develops without fertilization. Parthenogenesis has been observed in various shark species and typically occurs when females are isolated from males. Alternatively, Yoko could be due to a case of delayed fertilization, where the egg was fertilized long after mating (some shark species have been found to store sperm for up to 45 months).

For more: [CNN Article: "Baby shark mysteriously born in aquarium tank housing only females"](#)

GET INVOLVED WITH THE WHMC!



Visit our website!

Submit your work, recent publications, upcoming events, and more [here](#) to be featured in our monthly newsletter!



Share the WHMC listserv with others!

It's your WHMC communication engagement team here!

Kate Aberman



Sarah Rebbeor



Kylie Hutchison



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!

Mehnaz Shafquat



Emily Perou

