

UNIFIED IN LEADING REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH FORWARD



Department of
Obstetrics and Gynecology
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN
SCHOOL OF MEDICINE AND PUBLIC HEALTH



2024-25 Year in Review

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR



We opened the 2024-25 academic year by celebrating an incredible accomplishment: in October 2024, our amazing community of faculty, trainees, staff, alumni, and friends came together to celebrate the UW Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology's 95th anniversary. We spent a weekend together reviewing our progress and

recommitting to our mission of improving the reproductive health and wellbeing of people in Wisconsin and beyond. And despite a year full of external challenges, we have persevered in our mission areas of education, research, clinical care, and advocacy.

Together, we provide a comprehensive educational experience:

Our exceptional medical education programs are preparing the next generation of reproductive health leaders. This year, we added an additional spot to the OB-GYN residency program, bringing our resident complement to eight per class. Our strong and organized faculty mentoring program supports UW School of Medicine and Public Health medical students interested in matching into OB-GYN residencies. The four UW Department of OB-GYN clinical fellowships continue to recruit talented physicians who graduate with the skills and preparation necessary to meet a growing need for infertility, high-risk pregnancy, urogynecology, and gynecologic cancer care.

Together, we achieve outstanding basic, clinical, and translational research:

This year brought a lot of uncertainty around research funding. While reproductive health research remains underfunded at the national level, the breadth of our research programs is impressive, and our faculty and staff work hard to maintain impactful research programs across the field. In the spirit of interdisciplinary research, investigators from the Department of OB-GYN submitted a record number of proposals in collaboration with other departments. These submissions demonstrate a deep commitment to developing the partnerships with experts outside of OB-GYN that are necessary to advance science and improve reproductive health.

Together, we embody patient-centered care, service, and advocacy for reproductive health:

Our clinical programs are robust, with patient volume growing across our specialty and subspecialty areas. Several new clinical faculty arrived this year, including [Dr. Babak Vakili](#), who joined us as the first medical director of UW Health Integrated Specialty Care for Women. Our urogynecology and reconstructive pelvic surgery services and gynecologic oncology outpatient clinic successfully relocated to the brand new Eastpark Medical Center, with more specialty services to follow in the near future. We continue our efforts to improve patient experience across our programs by investing in quality improvement infrastructure within our department.

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

Together, we live the Wisconsin Idea:

In times of change and challenge, it is important for the Department of OB-GYN to find opportunities to connect with and support our community. The department's Engagement and Advocacy team help facilitate collaboration and bidirectional learning between our department, community members, scholars, public health professionals, clinicians, and policymakers through events, advisory groups, and outreach efforts.

Despite a year of tremendous external challenges, the faculty, researchers, learners, advanced practice providers, and staff in this department remain resilient, creative, adaptable, and unified in leading reproductive health forward in Wisconsin and beyond.

With gratitude,



Ellen M. Hartenbach, MD

Chair and Professor, Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology

Ben Miller Peckham, MD, PhD, Chair in Obstetrics and Gynecology

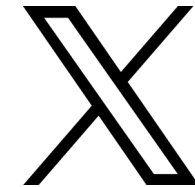
Learn more about the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology mission and ways to support our department:



<https://www.obgyn.wisc.edu/give>



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TOGETHER, WE...PROVIDE A COMPREHENSIVE EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCE

MEDICAL STUDENTS



Medical students learn best by interacting with a variety of clinical teachers. In 2024-25, the education team revived the **Nurses as Teachers program**, providing a structured setting for nurses to teach medical students on Labor and Delivery in UnityPoint Health-Meriter Hospital. We also expanded the **Residents as Teachers program**, connecting medical students with more upper-level OB-GYN residents — and helping those residents hone their teaching skills.

RESIDENT EDUCATION



We are working to address the ongoing shortage of OB-GYNs nationwide. This year, Dr. Bridget Kelly successfully gained ACGME approval to **expand our resident complement to eight per year**. With the support of a grant obtained by Dr. Ryan Spencer from the US Department of Health and Human Services Health Resources and Services Administration, we are pursuing bringing on an additional rural resident each year.

FELLOWSHIPS



The **Rural Family Medicine OB fellowship**, co-led by Dr. Ryan Luellwitz and colleagues from the Department of Family Medicine and Community Health, [recruited the first fellow](#) this year. River Cornelius, MD, will be the first person to participate in the two-year training program, which provides surgical training and high-risk obstetrical experience for family medicine physicians who plan to care for a rural population.

NOTEWORTHY



[Badger, Ahrendt elected as ACOG District VI junior fellow leaders](#)

Residents Drs. Taylor Badger and Hannah Ahrendt were selected to serve as ACOG District VI Vice Chair and Secretary/Treasurer. In these roles, they represent the needs and concerns of junior fellows from across District VI, which covers Wisconsin and several other Midwestern states.



[Giles selected as UW SMPH Phase 1 Preceptor Program director](#)

Dr. Dobie Giles is responsible for integrating the preceptor program within the medical school curriculum, supporting Phase 1 students and preceptors, building and maintaining positive relationships with health systems throughout southern Wisconsin, and providing education and orientation to preceptors in the program.



[Bajpai receives WMAA 2025 Outstanding Resident Teaching Award](#)

Dr. Rusha Bajpai was voted best resident teacher across all programs by fourth-year medical students in the UW School of Medicine and Public Health. She was described as *“a perfect example of how to balance her own roles and responsibilities as a resident with assisting on the team.”*



[Huffman receives 2025 UW Health Physician Excellence Rising Star Clinical Educator Award](#)

Dr. Laura Huffman was nominated for, among other accomplishments, developing a laparoscopic curriculum that helps her division provide equitable feedback and perspective on students' abilities to acquire new procedural skills.

TOGETHER, WE...ACHIEVE OUTSTANDING BASIC, CLINICAL, AND TRANSLATIONAL RESEARCH



The Department of OB-GYN continues to build on its clinical research infrastructure, with notable contributions from the [Human Subjects Core \(HSC\)](#) and the [Tissue Collections and Processing Core \(TCPC\)](#). In 2024-25, the HSC supported over 20 open non-cancer clinical trials across the department, including investigator-initiated trials and studies sponsored by NIH, industry, and foundations. These trials span a wide range of topics, including hypertension in pregnancy, pelvic health, infertility, and neonatal outcomes.

The TCPC, the only functioning tissue collections and processing core at UnityPoint Health-Meriter Hospital, has experienced dramatic growth: 19 principal investigators from across six departments have 18 active or pending studies using the TCPC. The core now supports the collection and storage of over nine types of biospecimens — including placentas, umbilical cord tissue, maternal blood, and ovaries — with over 190 placentas and 103 cord blood serum samples banked since May 2024.



Dr. Aleks Stanic-Kostic leads a lab of exceptional researchers who are focused on understanding how the immune system shapes pregnancy outcomes. The Stanic Lab team is unlocking this question with an impressive portfolio of projects, which include developing a rhesus macaque model of placental injury, tracking immune cells through the decidua, and studying how the fetal immune system is programmed. Their work is building foundational knowledge to improve reproductive health.

Supporting the development of emerging scientists is a core value in the Stanic Lab; Dr. Stanic says that mentoring the next generation of scientists is “by far the most rewarding part of my career.”

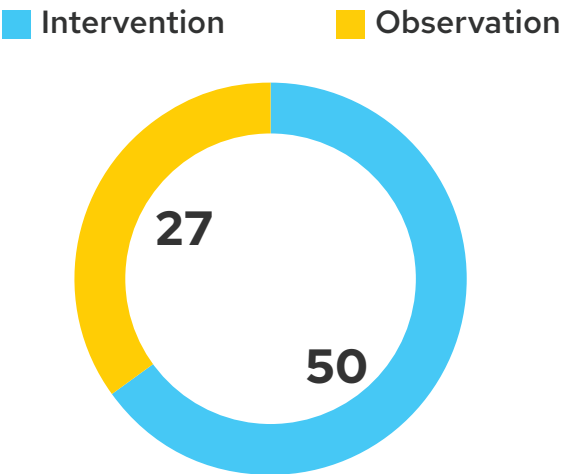
In the last year, researchers, postdoctoral trainees, and graduate students in the Stanic Lab have earned federal grants, given more than 15 presentations at [national conferences](#), co-authored multiple studies, and received eight prestigious awards for their work.



Dr. Lisa Barroilhet is co-principal investigator and co-research director for the UW–Madison [Building Interdisciplinary Research Careers in Women's Health](#) (BIRCWH) program, an NIH-funded K12 grant that fosters development of early-career faculty who wish to develop independent careers focused on women's health research. The program's funding was recently renewed so additional faculty can compete for this internal career development award in 2025-26.

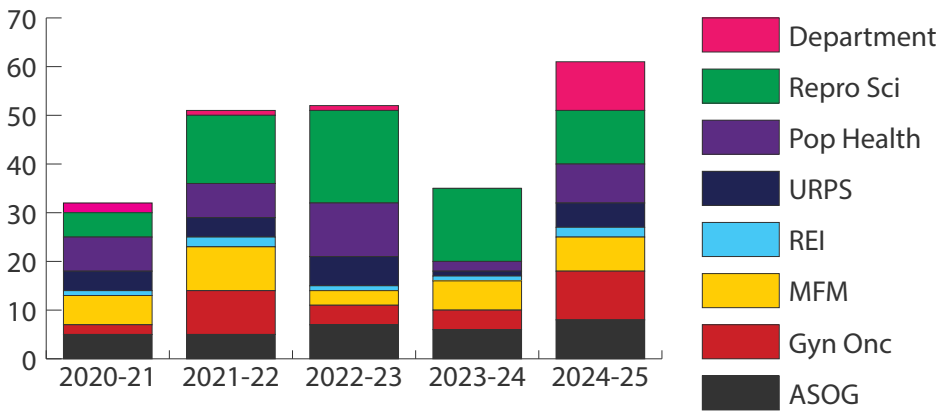
TOGETHER, WE...ACHIEVE OUTSTANDING BASIC, CLINICAL, AND TRANSLATIONAL RESEARCH

Cancer trial enrollments by type

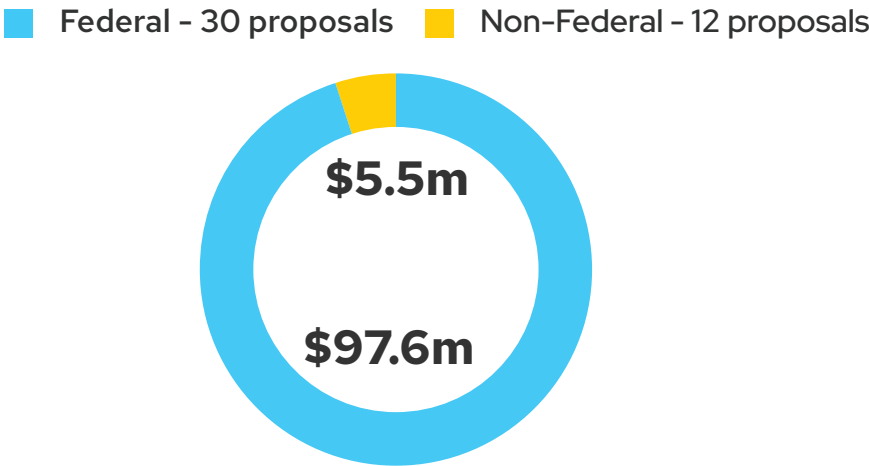


Our research collaboration with the UW Carbone Cancer Center (UWCCC) for gynecologic oncology trials remains robust and successful. **Dr. Janelle Sobecki** and **Dr. Ellen Hartenbach** are co-directors of the UWCCC Gyn Oncology Disease-Oriented Team. In 2024-25, there were 43 open gynecologic oncology trials at UWCCC, with 77 patients enrolled.

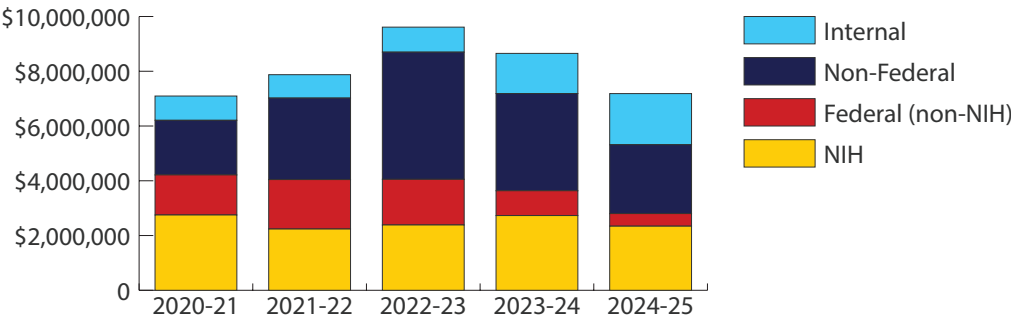
New Projects by Division



Collaborative Research Proposals



Research Awards by Funder



TOGETHER, WE...ACHIEVE OUTSTANDING BASIC, CLINICAL, AND TRANSLATIONAL RESEARCH



Barroilhet and Patankar receive WPP grant for ovarian cancer research

The collaborative grant with PI Jenny Gumperz, PhD, provides funding for the project *Synergizing OXPHTS inhibitors and Innate T cell-DC Cellular Immunotherapy to Treat Ovarian Cancer*, which builds on their previous work to understand and apply atovaquone, a common anti-malarial medication, to ovarian cancer prevention and treatment.



UWPRC core research project to adapt Staying Healthy After Childbirth program

In Wisconsin, Black women and birthing people experience disproportionate rates of hypertension during and after pregnancy. The UW–Madison Prevention Research Center core project *Adaptation of Staying Healthy After Childbirth (STAC) to Prevent and Reduce Racial Disparities in Postpartum Morbidity and Mortality*, led by Dr. Kara Hoppe, is working to provide remote pregnancy support and blood pressure care in community-based organizations around the state.



Green, Anderson-Carter receive WPP grant to study postpartum pain

Dr. Tiffany Green and Dr. India Anderson-Carter received a grant from the Wisconsin Partnership Program for the project *Examining inequities in postpartum pain treatment among Wisconsin birthing people*. This project will examine whether and how clinician bias contributes to Black-White inequities in postpartum pain evaluation and management in Wisconsin and develop interventions that reduce the prevalence of unmanaged postpartum pain among Black patients.

NOTEWORTHY



Ong named as co-investigator on two WPP grants

Proteomic Exploration of Lung Matrisome in Pulmonary Fibrosis: Role of MRC2 is a three-year Collaborative Health Science Program grant, which will be led by Department of Medicine Chair Lynn Schnapp, MD. Ong will also be a co-investigator on the grant *Radiopharmaceutical Therapy for Leptomeningeal Metastatic Disease*, a three-year grant led by Department of Human Oncology Chair Zachary Morris, MD.



Virumbrales-Muñoz is MPI on NIH R21 grant

Dr. María Virumbrales-Muñoz received a R21 grant from the NIH National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research for the project *Microphysiological systems to recapitulate and interrogate Sjögren's disease salivary gland pathogenesis*. The project will use an in vitro bioengineered system — a specialty of Virumbrales-Muñoz's — to model Sjögren's disease, a systemic autoimmune disease characterized by severe oral and ocular dryness due to exocrine gland inflammation.



Adekunle brings health equity expertise to Division of Reproductive and Population Health

The Division of Reproductive and Population Health continues to deepen their bench of talented social scientists: this year, the division successfully recruited Dr. Tiwaladeoluwa Adekunle, whose research focuses on the reproductive health needs and outcomes of people from socially marginalized backgrounds.

TOGETHER, WE...EMBODY PATIENT-CENTERED CARE, SERVICE, AND ADVOCACY FOR REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH

Outpatient Clinic Visits – 2024-25

Academic Specialists in OB-GYN	44,572
Gynecologic Oncology	7,886
Maternal-Fetal Medicine	12,549
Reproductive Endocrinology & Infertility	12,083
Urogynecology & Reconstructive Pelvic Surgery	7,774

Procedure Volume – 2024-25

Inpatient Procedures	Outpatient Procedures
6,450	8,858

UWHealth



UnityPoint Health
Meriter



UW Health opened Eastpark Medical Center in November 2024, the largest medical center built in the United States in 2024. A central pillar of Eastpark is the [UW Health Integrated Specialty Care for Women](#) program, a multidisciplinary clinic designed to help meet the specialty health care needs of women, including pelvic floor disorders. ISCW brings together physicians, advanced practice providers, and other clinicians from obstetrics and gynecology, urology, colorectal surgery, gastroenterology, behavioral health, and physical therapy to offer seamless care for a variety of concerns.



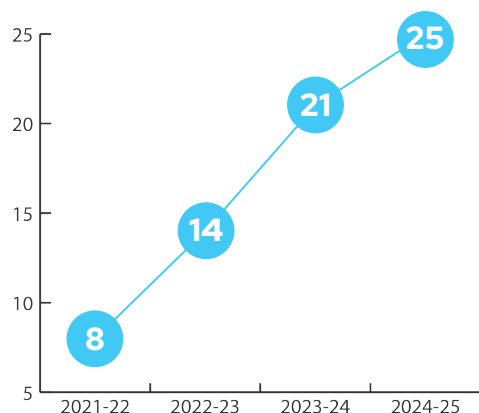
Katie O'Brien, MD, joined the Division of Academic Specialists in OB-GYN in September 2024. Dr. O'Brien is one of only two fellowship-trained Pediatric and Adolescent Gynecologists in Wisconsin. She has an affiliate appointment in the UW SMPH Department of Pediatrics and brings her OB-GYN expertise to pediatrics patients and the American Family Children's Hospital.



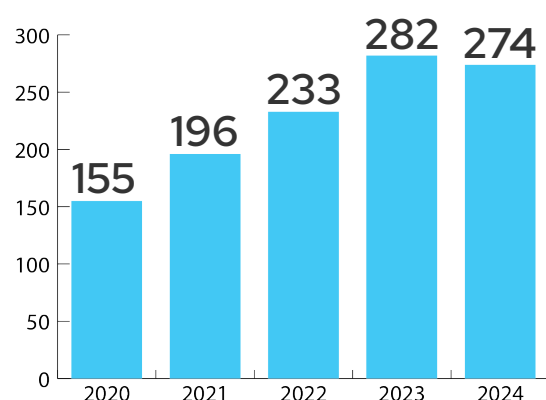
Over the last few years, the department has significantly grown the quality improvement infrastructure, shaping better outcomes for patients and providers alike. In early 2025, the department hired **Emily Tachon** as the first-ever Quality Improvement Program Manager. Emily works closely with **Katie Sampene, MD** and **Sumer Wallace, MD, MS**, co-leaders of the Department of OB-GYN Quality Committee, the Quality Improvement Review Committee, and directors of obstetric and gynecologic quality and safety, respectively, to drive QI initiatives throughout the department, including analyzing and utilizing data to enhance quality of care, supporting trainees' scholarly efforts in QI, designing and maintaining data reporting systems, and more.

TOGETHER, WE...EMBODY PATIENT-CENTERED CARE, SERVICE, AND ADVOCACY FOR REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH

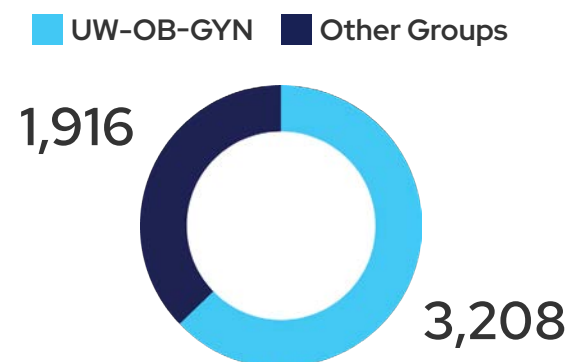
Fetal Surgeries



IVF - Egg Retrievals



Meriter Hospital Births, 2024-25



NOTEWORTHY



Beninati becomes interim director of UW Health Fetal Diagnosis and Treatment Center

Under Dr. Beninati's leadership, the UnityPoint Health-Meriter Center for Perinatal Care and UW Health Fetal Diagnosis and Treatment Center provide outstanding care to people with high-risk pregnancies, including fetal cardiac care, multiple gestation, growth restrictions, other fetal genetic conditions, and fetal anomalies.



Wallace leads UW Health Robotics Steering Committee

In this role, Dr. Sumer Wallace helps oversee robotic surgery programs across UW Hospital and UnityPoint Health-Meriter Hospital, making sure programs have access to robotic operating rooms, and helping service lines expand their robotic surgery offerings.



Ladanyi accepted into Osher Collaborative Faculty Fellowship

Dr. Camille Ladanyi will join other scholars in expanding their integrative health expertise and developing their individual interests in integrative health over the course of the year-long program.



Adams receives 2025 UW Health Physician Excellence Rising Star Leadership Award

In receiving this award, Dr. Jacquelyn Adams was praised as a leader in improving maternal health outcomes in the Department of OB-GYN, UnityPoint Health-Meriter Hospital, and the state of Wisconsin.

TOGETHER, WE...LIVE THE WISCONSIN IDEA

We strive to help individuals better understand their own health, and to shape the future of clinical care, education, and research in Wisconsin and across the nation. UW Department of OB-GYN engagement and advocacy efforts include serving in local, regional, and statewide reproductive health organizations, advocating for expanded OB-GYN research funding and healthcare access, sharing expertise in the media, presenting research on national stages, and more.

	Publications	Presentations
Academic Specialists in OB-GYN	24	52
Gynecologic Oncology	17	37
Maternal-Fetal Medicine	19	25
Reproductive Endocrinology & Infertility	4	28
Reproductive & Population Health	15	26
Reproductive Sciences	17	14
Urogynecology & Reconstructive Pelvic Surgery	8	28

HEALTHY WOMEN COMMUNITY TALKS

In the 2024-25 academic year, UW OB-GYN faculty, advanced practice providers, and staff hosted three [Healthy Women Community Talks](#):

- **Break Free from Pelvic Floor Disorders** – Caroline Cox, MD; Margaret Wilkes, MD; Sari Archer, NP; Angie Sergeant, NP; Maureen Sheetz, NP
- **Your Health After Pregnancy** – Jacquelyn Adams, MD, MS; Ryan McDonald, MD; Katherine Sampene, MD
- **Your Fertility Journey** – Bala Bhagavath, MD; Laura Cooney, MD; Aleks Stanic-Kostic, MD, PhD; Julianne Zweifel, PhD



Dr. India Anderson-Carter joined the Division of Academic Specialists in OB-GYN faculty in September 2024. She is also the first-ever director of social impact and belonging in the Department of OB-GYN, leading the department's efforts towards supporting an inclusive workplace and aligning the department's social impact and belonging initiatives with goals and priorities from UW Health and the UW School of Medicine and Public Health.

Through the **Chair's Community Advisory Council**, the outreach team aims to build strong relationships with other organizations and individuals focused on improving reproductive health and health equity in Madison and beyond. The Community Advisory Council meets quarterly and includes 14 community partners. Together, the Council identifies opportunities for collaboration to advance reproductive health.

TOGETHER, WE...LIVE THE WISCONSIN IDEA

The Department of OB-GYN relies on the generosity of grateful patients, friends, alumni, and other supporters to help us provide patients with compassionate, high quality, and state-of-the-art care; educate the next generation of outstanding OB-GYNs; and advance cutting-edge research.

[Chairs, professorships, and fellowships](#) are among the most important tools the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology has to retain the outstanding scholars currently on the faculty, and to recruit new leaders in all fields. We are deeply appreciative of the generosity of our supporters and community, who understand that reproductive health is the foundation of healthy communities and a healthy society.

NEW FACULTY INVESTITURES



Tiffany Green, PhD

*Gloria E. Sarto, MD, PhD,
Chair in Women's Health and
Health Equity Research*



Janelle Sobecki, MD

*Ginny Wolfe Faculty Fellow of
Ovarian Cancer Research*

Contact Advancement Manager Lily Johnson if you'd like to learn more about supporting the UW Department of OB-GYN: lily.johnson@wisc.edu.



Celebrating alongside grateful patients is an ongoing goal of the department's advancement team. This year, the **Division of Reproductive Endocrinology and Infertility** and UW Health Fertility Care [celebrated 15 years of exceptional fertility care](#) alongside more than 300 patients, children and families. UW Health Fertility Care providers and staff reconnected with families who received fertility services and celebrated the clinic's growth in important areas like IVF, oncofertility, third party reproduction, and more.

NOTEWORTHY



Domeyer-Klenske, Powell testify to legislature about postpartum healthcare coverage

Wisconsin is one of just two states that have not extended Medicaid to cover postpartum patients for one year after giving birth. Dr. Amy Domeyer-Klenske and Dr. Jacqueline Powell spoke with the Wisconsin Senate Committee on Health about the impacts of not having health insurance after giving birth.



Casey'Grant co-chairs Wisconsin Public Health Association Maternal and Child Health section

Department of OB-GYN Outreach Specialist Cheryl Casey'Grant was chosen to co-lead the WPHA Maternal and Child Health section, which advocates for the improvement of services that benefit mothers and children across the state.



Wellness Committee leads Clean Birth Kits volunteer effort

People from across the department joined to assemble 150 Clean Birth Kits, which are distributed to clinics and birth attendants around the world with the aim of reducing maternal and infant mortality.



Residents host outreach session for SMPH students

Around 20 students joined the session to learn more about the UW Department of OB-GYN residency and get some hands-on skills training from OB-GYN residents. Residents led breakout groups on vaginal delivery, pelvic exams, and suturing.

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AWARDS AND HONORS



Michael Beninati, MD
Assistant Professor, MFM
Department of Surgery
– [Surgery Science Image Contest winner](#)



Julia Gelissen, MD
Fellow, Gyn Onc
[Editorial Fellow](#) –
International Journal of
Gynecologic Oncology



Ellen Hartenbach, MD
Chair, Dept of OB-GYN
[Board of Directors](#) – UW
Medical Foundation



Jenny Higgins, PhD, MPH
Professor, Reproductive and
Population Health
[Vilas Faculty Mid-Career](#)
[Investigator Award](#)
[UW SMPH GWIMS- BIRWCH](#)
[Mentorship Award](#)



J. Igor Iruretagoyena, MD
Professor, MFM
[Alpha Omega Alpha Honor](#)
[Society](#)



Janine Rhoades, MD
Associate Professor, MFM
[Editorial Board](#) –
Obstetrics and Gynecology



Laurel Rice, MD
Emerita Professor
[Wisconsin Medical Alumni](#)
[Association Clinical Sciences](#)
[Emeriti Faculty Award](#)



Sumer Wallace, MD
Associate Professor, Gyn Onc
[UW Health Physician](#)
[Leadership Development](#)
[Program](#)



Andrea Wegryznowicz, PhD
Postdoc, Division of
Reproductive Sciences
[Oral Presentation Award](#) –
Madison Scholars Symposium



Claire Wendland, MD, PhD
Professor, Reproductive and
Population Health
[UW Hilldale Award](#)

FACULTY PROMOTIONS

Kim Bannon, MD – Clinical Associate Professor

Eliza Bennett, MD – Clinical Professor

Luther Gaston, MD – Clinical Professor

Kara Hoppe, DO, PhD – Professor (CHS)

Molly Lepic, DO – Clinical Associate Professor

Ryan Luellwitz, DO – Clinical Associate Professor

Irene Ong, PhD – Associate Professor with tenure

Katherine Sampene, MD – Clinical Professor

Ryan Spencer, MD, MS – Professor (CHS)

NEW FACULTY HIRES

Tiwaladeoluwa Adekunle, PhD – Reproductive and
Population Health

India Anderson-Carter, MD – ASOG

Erin Bailey, MD, MS – Maternal-Fetal Medicine

Kristina Kaljo, PhD – Education

Abigail Nelezen, MD – ASOG

Kathleen O'Brien, MD – ASOG

Ben Pickus, MD – ASOG

Santiago Porragas, MD – ASOG

Kathryn Randall, MD – ASOG

Awa Sanneh, MD – ASOG

Jenna Schmidt, PhD – Reproductive Sciences

John Soehl, MD – Maternal-Fetal Medicine

Saule Tamkus, MD – ASOG

Babak Vakili, MD – URPS

Margaret Wilkes, MD – URPS