



# ***UNIFIED IN LEADING REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH FORWARD***

***Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology***



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

**UWHealth**



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# MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR



In 2024, the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology celebrates 95 years of reproductive health education, research, clinical care, and advocacy. It was the honor of my career in 2022 to become Chair of this exceptional department after nearly thirty years as a member of the faculty, including very instructive experiences as Gynecologic Oncology Division Director, Residency Program Director, and Vice Chair of Education and Faculty Development.

I picked up the baton in 2022 from my friend and mentor Laurel Rice, MD, who radically reshaped the department in her 15 years of service. I am proud to look out today at a department that continues to grow and excel in all areas, that has weathered two immense challenges to our field, and that is on an unstoppable upward trajectory.

## REMARKABLE

Our 67 faculty, 39 advanced practice providers, 38 trainees, and more than 75 administrative staff in the Department of Ob-Gyn are committed to excellence in each of our mission areas. We launched two new subspecialty fellowship programs since 2019, recruiting the first Reproductive Endocrinology and Infertility fellow in 2023 and graduating the first Urogynecology and Reconstructive Pelvic Surgery fellow in 2024. Research leaders in the department revitalized our research infrastructure, expanding the cores and services we offer in preparation for our future research goal of developing a Center for Perinatal and Reproductive Health Research.

*In 2024, US News and World Report ranked **UW Health University Hospital #7 in the nation** for Ob-Gyn services and named **UnityPoint Health-Meriter Hospital a Best Hospital for Maternity Care**.*

## RESILIENT

The last five years have included some unexpected events. Every member of the Department of Ob-Gyn pulled together to help us navigate the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, which disrupted clinical care, teaching, and research alike. And when the U.S. Supreme Court overturned abortion protections with the 2022 *Dobbs vs. Jackson Women's Health Organization* decision, clinical and educational leaders worked together to ensure residents could receive family planning training. We are still navigating the impacts of both of these unprecedented events, but I am confident that our strong team will continue to meet each challenge head-on.

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



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



## RISING

There are exciting developments on the horizon in each of our mission areas:

- In 2025, we will increase our resident complement to eight trainees per year and begin redesign of our Rural Residency Program in partnership with Marshfield Clinic.
- Our research teams will dive into several new projects with federal funding from the National Institutes of Health, the Centers for Disease Control, and the Health Resources and Services Administration.
- Many of our outstanding clinical programs will move to Eastpark Medical Center, a state-of-the-art facility that will offer new options for patients under the Integrated Specialty Care for Women program.

I am so impressed by everything we have accomplished in the last five years. It is an honor to work alongside our talented UW Ob-Gyn community as we celebrate 95 years and approach 100 years of excellence as a department that is **unified in leading reproductive health forward.**

With gratitude,



*Ellen M. Hartenbach, MD*

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

### BY THE NUMBERS (2019-2024)



**Clinical trainee graduates**

**\$26M**

**Research funding**



**Academic presentations**



**Peer-reviewed publications**



**Patient encounters**



# DEPARTMENT OF OBSTETRICS AND GYNECOLOGY LEADERSHIP

## VICE CHAIRS AND DIVISION DIRECTORS



Front, l-r: Reproductive and Population Health Division Director Jenny Higgins; Chief Administrative Officer Kara Mulligan; Department Chair Ellen Hartenbach; Gynecologic Oncology Division Director Lisa Barroilhet

Back, l-r: Reproductive Sciences Division Director and Vice Chair of Basic Research Manish Patankar; Academic Specialists in Ob-Gyn Division Director Amy Domeyer-Klenske; Urogynecology & Reconstructive Pelvic Surgery Division Director Christine Heisler; Vice Chair of Finance J. Igor Iruretagoyena; Associate Director of Finance Dan Egan; Vice Chair of Faculty Development, Education and Wellness David Kushner

Not pictured: Vice Chair of Clinical Research Kara Hoppe; Vice Chair of Clinical Operations Katie Sampene; Maternal-Fetal Medicine Division Director Janine Rhoades; Reproductive Endocrinology & Infertility Division Director Bala Bhagavath

## ADMINISTRATIVE LEADERSHIP TEAM



Front, l-r: Outreach Program Manager Julia Reeves; Chief Administrative Officer Kara Mulligan; Administrative Manager Carol Hulland; Communications Manager Jacquelyn Askins

Back, l-r: Associate Director of Finance Dan Egan; Administrative Supervisor Greg Erickson; Advancement Manager Lily Johnson; Education Program Manager Gwen Niksic

Not pictured: Associate Director of Research Heidi Janzen



*Christy Lincicum*  
*Executive Assistant to the Chair and Chief Administrative Officer*



# EDUCATION



*Ob-Gyn residents at their 2024 residency retreat*



*Department of Ob-Gyn fellows and fellowship leaders*

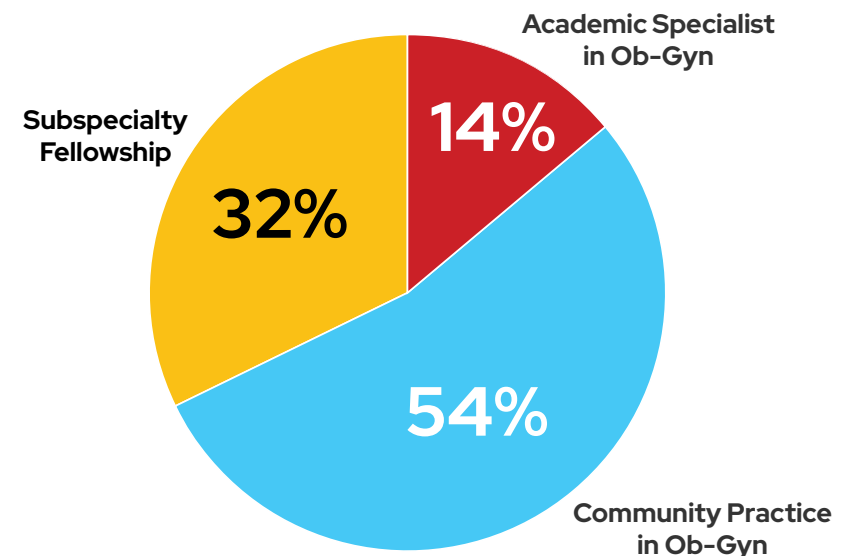
Cultivating the next generation of reproductive health leaders is a commitment the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology fully embraces. Faculty, advanced practice providers, and staff work together to provide an outstanding and comprehensive education experience that motivates medical students, graduate students, residents, fellows, faculty and community members to be lifelong learners in reproductive health.

## A NEW ERA OF RESIDENCY LEADERSHIP



In 2023, **Bridget Kelly, MD**, assumed the role of Residency Program Director after four years as Associate Program Director. **Caroline Cox, MD**, and **Abigail Cutler, MD, MPH**, became Associate Program Directors that year as well. Since then, they have worked together as an exceptional team to develop educational curricula, goals and objectives; supervise and evaluate residents; guide resident recruitment and selection; and bring a positive influence to resident wellbeing and work environment.

## POST-RESIDENCY CAREER PATHS





## FULL-SCOPE RESIDENCY TRAINING IN THE POST-DOBBS ERA

The Department of Ob-Gyn focuses on improving the health and quality of life for people across the reproductive life span. Residents in the Department of Ob-Gyn have opportunities learn to provide all aspects of this clinical care, including abortion, family planning/contraception, care for complex pregnancies, and miscarriage management.

Following the U.S. Supreme Court's *Dobbs* decision in 2022, which temporarily ended the provision of most abortion services across the state of Wisconsin, the Department of Ob-Gyn partnered with a program in Illinois to develop a family planning rotation, which ensured that residents continued to receive exceptional, hands-on abortion care training.



**Abigail Cutler, MD, MPH**, associate residency program director, had a leading role in establishing the out-of-state rotation that allowed residents to develop their skills and meet the ACGME requirements for procedural volume. Feedback from faculty and residents both in Wisconsin and at the partner site has been extremely positive. As of 2024, residents currently receive abortion training both in Wisconsin as well as in Illinois.



*Education Administrative Team: Amanda Wildenberg; Gwen Niksic; Dylan Kittell; Alison Klein; Ariel Sorenson; Megan Tickner-Young*

## EXPANDING SUBSPECIALTY TRAINING

In addition to thriving, longstanding fellowships in [Gynecologic Oncology](#) and [Maternal-Fetal Medicine](#), the Department of Ob-Gyn developed two new subspecialty fellowships in recent years.

The [Urogynecology and Reconstructive Pelvic Surgery](#) (URPS) fellowship, the only URPS fellowship program in Wisconsin, began welcoming fellows in 2021. The first fellow graduated in 2024.

The Division of [Reproductive Endocrinology and Infertility](#) (REI) created a fellowship program in 2024, welcoming the first REI fellow in August 2024. This is the first REI fellowship program in the state of Wisconsin and one of only about 40 in the country.

### *Fellowship Directors:*



**Ryan Spencer, MD, MS**  
*Gynecologic Oncology*



**Janine Rhoades, MD**  
*Maternal-Fetal Medicine*



**Bala Bhagavath, MD**  
*Reproductive Endocrinology  
& Infertility*



**Christine Heisler, MD, MS**  
*Urogynecology and Reconstructive  
Pelvic Surgery*



## LEADERS IN MEDICAL STUDENT EDUCATION



**Dobie Giles, MD, MS, MBA**  
Phase I Assistant Block Leader



**Laura Jacques, MD**  
Phase II Department Block Leader



**Kathy Stewart, MD**  
Phase II Director

Faculty in the department are embedded throughout all three phases of the UW School of Medicine and Public Health ForWard curriculum. **Dobie Giles, MD, MS, MBA**, is a Phase I Assistant Block Leader, supporting education that focuses on basic science while also incorporating clinic science. **Kathy Stewart, MD**, is the director of Phase II of medical student education across the entire SMPH. In addition to her role as Phase II Department Block Leader for the Specialized Care of Obstetric, Gynecologic and Pediatric Patients (SCOPE) Block, **Laura Jacques, MD**, leads the mentorship program that supports medical students interested in ob-gyn careers. Numerous faculty across the whole department support and mentor students through their Phase III clinical rotations, including Inpatient Acting Internship, Ambulatory Acting Internship, and various electives.

## ADDING REPRODUCTIVE EQUITY TO THE MEDICAL SCHOOL CURRICULUM

Though not every student in the UW School of Medicine and Public Health will choose obstetrics and gynecology as their specialty, having a foundational understanding of both how race shaped the development of ob-gyn, as well as historical and contemporary



issues around abortion is beneficial for anyone planning to practice medicine. Since 2021, **Tiffany Green, PhD**, introduced [two new courses](#) to the medical school curriculum to connect all students to necessary background about reproductive health and health equity

in the United States: *Race in American Obstetrics and Gynecology* and *Abortion in Wisconsin and Beyond: Exploring Medical, Public Health, and Social Science Perspectives*.

## NOTEWORTHY

### *Celebrating 20 years as a Ryan Program*

Since 2004, The Department of Ob-Gyn has been a Ryan Residency Program site. The Ryan Program works directly with ob-gyn residency programs to integrate training in abortion and contraception care as a required part of the residency curriculum.

### *Reproductive health worldwide*



The Department of Ob-Gyn is committed to providing relevant skills and training for residents who are interested in working in low-resource communities locally or abroad. In 2024, [Awa Sanneh, MD](#), joined the Department of Ob-Gyn faculty to help lead the Global Health Residency Track. A former Global Health Resident herself, Dr. Sanneh will work to pursue new global health rotations.

## FOCUS ON THE FUTURE

In order to advance the educational programs in the Department of Ob-Gyn and continue to prepare medical students and residents for exceptional careers in reproductive health, educational leaders in the department plan to:

- Expand opportunities in reproductive health training through: increasing the resident and maternal-fetal medicine fellowship complements; exploring additional clinical sites and Ambulatory Acting Internships for medical students; and investigating possibilities for future subspecialty fellowships in obstetrics.
- Support and encourage more trainee participation in national conferences and committees.
- Facilitate scholarship that evaluates the effectiveness of educational programs by recruiting a new Education Specialist faculty with a focus on educational research and curriculum design.



# TRAINING TOMORROW'S RURAL OB-GYN PHYSICIANS



*Dr. Ryan Spencer presents on a rural health care panel at the 2023 Wisconsin Healthcare Workforce Summit*

Across the United States, rural access to obstetrics and gynecology providers is on the decline. According to the Wisconsin Office of Rural Health, 40 percent of hospitals in rural Wisconsin do not offer obstetrics services. “There is an actual crisis in rural medicine,” says Department of Ob-Gyn Chair **Ellen Hartenbach, MD**. “Hospitals in rural communities are closing their maternity centers, and there are parts of Wisconsin where people are long distances away from hospitals where they can give birth.”

The UW Department of Ob-Gyn has been a leader in addressing rural health disparities since 2017, when the Residency Program launched the first-ever rural residency track in the country. The rural residency track gives residents real-life experience practicing in rural settings with rotations at several rural hospitals and clinics around the state. “It’s a really fascinating phenomenon that we’ve seen repeatedly, the more time someone spends training in a rural area, the much more likely they are to practice in a rural area following residency,” says **Ryan Spencer, MD, MS**, rural residency track director.

With the help of a [new grant](#) from the United States Department of Health and Human Services through the **Health Resources and Services Administration** (HRSA), the Department of Ob-Gyn is poised to further

expand the rural training opportunities for ob-gyn residents in Wisconsin. The HRSA grant provides \$750,000 over three years to create a new Rural Training Program in partnership with the University of Wisconsin Hospitals and Clinics (UW Health) and the Marshfield Clinic Health System (MCHS) in central Wisconsin. In the current rural residency track training model, rural obgyn residents spent about six months of their four years of training in rural sites. With the new Rural Training Program, residents complete just under half of their training in Madison, establishing the foundations of their clinical skills at UW Health alongside other ob-gyn residents. They will spend more than two years of residency with MCHS, where they will continue to build skills in obstetrics, gynecologic surgery, and ambulatory medicine as they care for rural, underserved patients and become comfortable providing care in a rural community.

“What I’ve heard from the residents who go out on these rotations is they get a great experience in rural areas and smaller communities,” says Dr. Spencer. “They get a feeling for what their day-to-day life would be like. In some cases, they might have clinic on the same day they do a delivery on the same day they do some surgery. That’s not the typical experience when training at UW Health.”

The HRSA grant will also support adding another rural residency spot, doubling the rural resident complement in this already highly competitive track. Dr. Spencer led the HRSA grant application, which received a perfect score. He believes the rural rotations are an invaluable experience for rural obgyn residents as well as their peers.

The UW Department of Ob-Gyn was one of 15 recipients of the \$11 million investment from the federal government in rural health, and the only obstetrics and gynecology-specific program to be funded.



# HIGH-QUALITY EDUCATION THROUGH SIMULATION

Simulation education is foundational to a well-rounded clinical training experience. Medical simulations – educational activities using simulation aides to model clinical scenarios – can be helpful tools to allow medical trainees to build fundamental skills or practice uncommon procedures in a low-risk setting.



“Hands-on simulation brings those concepts of learning to life,” says Simulation Director **Camille Ladanyi, MD**. “It’s important to be able to take background information you’re learning in a lecture or a book to and apply it to the mechanical skill, and to do that in a safe environment where you feel comfortable.”

The Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology was an early adopter of simulations in graduate medical education, creating the dedicated Women and Infants Simulation Center in UnityPoint Health-Meriter Hospital in 2007. **Ellen Hartenbach, MD**, who was the Interim Chair at the time, designed the simulation program for ob-gyn residents that consisted of more than 30 individual labs in a two-year revolving curriculum utilizing surgical models, state of the art endoscopic trainers, and life size obstetrical mannequins to increase knowledge and confidence in diagnostic and procedural skills. Thanks to intentional investment and grants over time, today’s trainees in the Ob-Gyn Simulation Center practice their skills on a top-of-the-line ultrasound simulator, obstetric hemorrhage and Cesarean hysterectomy simulators, numerous laparobowl trainers, surgical instruments, and two NOELLE birthing simulators. The simulation center is available 24/7 for residents’ and fellows’ independent learning needs.

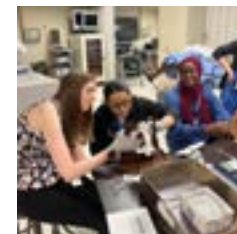
Education leaders in the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology have focused on simulation as a cornerstone of the residency and fellowship curricula. In previous years, the didactic lessons and simulation lessons offered during Thursday University, the weekly block of teaching time set aside for residents, were planned independently. In the 2023-24 academic year, residency program leadership

reorganized the didactic and simulation curriculum to better align the topics being covered in each modality.

“Bringing those topics together is just a tremendous change,” Dr. Ladanyi says. “When residents are learning about a topic in a lecture, then immediately applying it in a hands-on version, that creates a much stronger memory that will be much more applicable in the future.”

Reorganizing the curriculum also means more large-group simulations, which gives senior residents an opportunity to lead the workshops and hone their educational skills.

In the 2024-25 academic year, structured simulation hours for residents will increase by 23 percent from the year prior. As simulation becomes a greater part of the residency curriculum, education leaders are looking forward to bringing in new teachers, topics, and technology, from using 3-D printing to create detailed anatomical models to organizing sessions that emphasize the social and emotional skills involved in patient care.





# AWARDS AND HONORS



**Lisa Barroilhet, MD, MS, Dobie Giles, MD, Igor Iruretagoyena, MD, MS, Janine Rhoades, MD, and Stephen Rose, MD,** have served as American Board of Obstetrics and Gynecology subspecialty board examiners in recent years.



**Ellen Hartenbach, MD,** was invited to serve as a [member-at-large](#) for the Council of University Chairs in Obstetrics and Gynecology, with a two-year term beginning in 2023. She is also a member of the editorial board for the high-impact journal [Gynecologic Oncology](#).



After a series of progressive leadership roles in the Association of Managers of Gynecology and Obstetrics (AMGO), Department of Ob-Gyn Chief Administrative Officer **Kara Mulligan, MHA, MBA,** served as the AMGO president from 2022-2023.



**Bala Bhagavath, MD,** received the 2024 ASRM Star Award, recognizing members who have presented during at least nine ASRM Annual Meeting/Scientific Congresses from 2015-2024.



**Ryan Spencer, MD, MS,** was invited by the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists to co-chair the ninth edition of *PROLOG: Gynecologic Oncology and Critical Care*. The *PROLOG (Personal Review of Learning in Obstetrics and Gynecology)* books are self-directed study resources for ob-gyns.



In 2022, **Ian Bird, PhD,** was appointed to a four-year term as senior editor on the editorial boards of the *Journal of Molecular Endocrinology* and *Journal of Endocrinology*, the journals of record for the European Society of Endocrinology and Endocrine Society of Australia.



**Laura Jacques, MD,** was selected to receive the Wisconsin Medical Alumni Association Early Career Achievement Award in 2024, in honor of her excellence and dedication as an educator.



**Abigail Cutler, MD, MPH,** received a 2023 UW School of Medicine and Public Health Group on Women in Medicine and Science Impact Award for her tireless work to continue abortion resident training in the wake of the 2022 *Dobbs* decision.



*The Sexual Health Assessment in Women with Lung Cancer (SHAWL)* study, co-authored by **David Kushner, MD,** was featured in a media event during the 2022 World Conference on Lung Cancer.



**Ryan McDonald, MD,** graduated in 2022 from the American Professors of Gynecology and Obstetrics Academic Scholars and Leaders Program, a 15-month program designed to equip faculty with skills to be outstanding teachers and leaders.





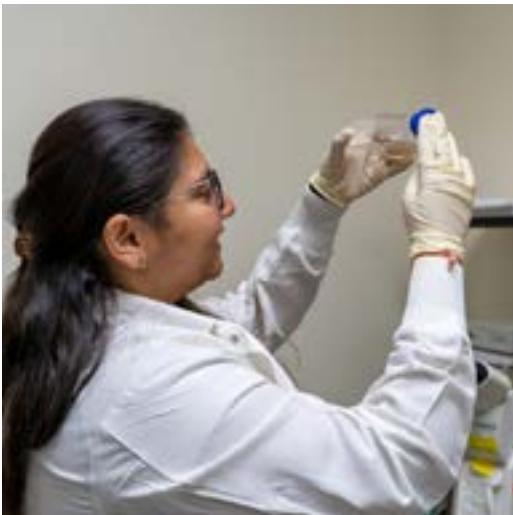
# RESEARCH



*Research Leadership: Vice Chair for Basic Research Manish Patankar; Research Associate Director Heidi Janzen; Vice Chair for Clinical Research Kara Hoppe; Research Program Assistant Elizabeth Albert*

Researchers, clinicians, trainees, and administrative staff in the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology work together to achieve outstanding basic, clinical, and translational research through departmental collaboration, integration, and support. Our researchers' efforts to understand today's most pressing issues – from the foundations of pregnancy-related conditions, to reproductive cancers, to Wisconsin's widening health disparities, to the individual and societal impacts of reproductive health policy – help pave the way to advances in education and clinical care.

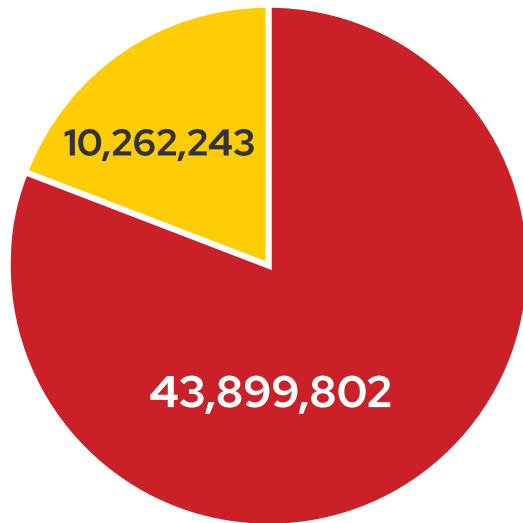
The Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology navigated logistical and policy hurdles over the last five years, adapting our research platform to be able to conduct reproductive health research despite the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic and the *Dobbs* decision. Research initiatives and infrastructure in the department have grown considerably. Research in the department has informed state policy, participation in multicenter and industry-sponsored trials has expanded, and research funding and infrastructure continue to grow.





## BY THE NUMBERS

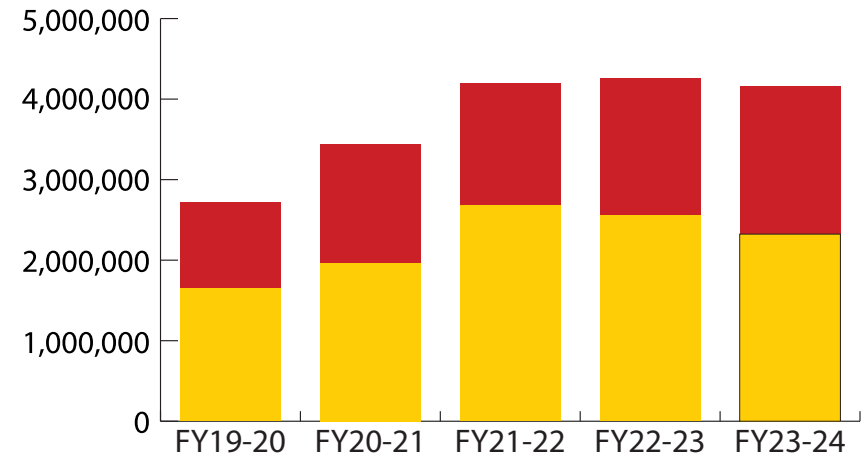
### Funding Requests (FY2023-24)



Federal Non-Federal

41 total grant submissions

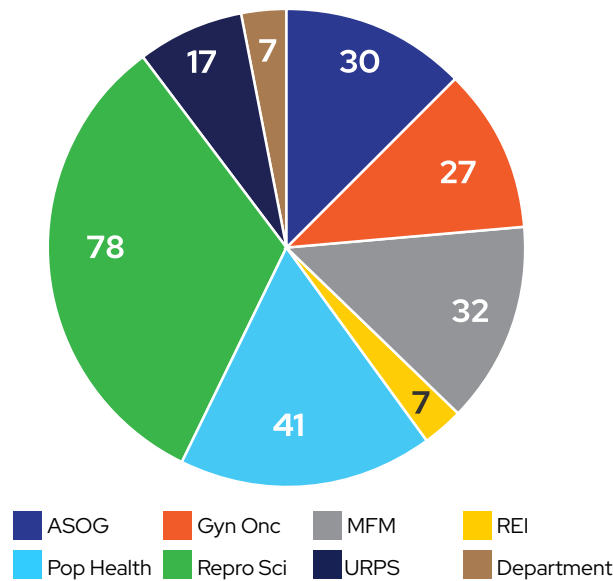
### Research Expenditures



Federal Funding

Non-Federal Funding

### New Projects by Division (2019-24)



ASOG Gyn Onc MFM REI  
Pop Health Repro Sci URPS Department



## INVESTING IN INFRASTRUCTURE

Supporting the department's research growth requires intentional investment in the structures and systems that make research possible. The Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology built a robust infrastructure through revitalized research cores that bolster every aspect of research:



The [Sponsored Projects and Finance Core](#), led by **Heidi Janzen, MBA**, assists faculty and staff with grant proposals (pre-award) and management of grants (post-award).



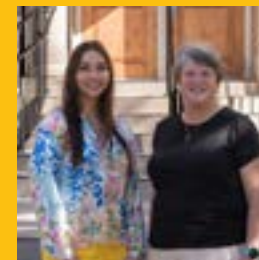
The [Human Subjects Core](#) provides faculty and staff with infrastructure and resources to support clinical research study coordination, including IRB and regulatory support and Clinical Research Coordinators for participant recruitment.



The [Tissue Collections and Processing Core](#), led by **Surena Becraft**, collects and banks obstetric tissue and fluid, including umbilical cord tissue and blood, maternal blood, and placenta. Tissue samples can be used in research studies to learn more about conditions that affect pregnancy.



The [Training Grant Core](#), led by **Grace Jensen**, provides support for, and management of, the department's training grants, as well as student and trainee research events and continuing education opportunities.



The [Data Management and Statistics Core](#), directed by **Amy Godecker, PhD, MS**, provides consultation to support the research needs of faculty, fellows, and residents for clinical, population health, medical education, quality improvement, and other projects.



## 65 YEARS OF LEADERSHIP IN ENDOCRINOLOGY AND REPRODUCTIVE PHYSIOLOGY

The University of Wisconsin–Madison [Endocrinology and Reproductive Physiology](#) (ERP) graduate program, founded in 1959, is a longstanding interdisciplinary training program with a focus on reproductive biology. The Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology has been a key partner in the program since its creation. Notably, former department chair Ben Miller Peckham, MD, PhD, (chair from 1956-1983) participated in its creation and served as one of the first faculty trainers.



**Ian Bird, PhD**, led ERP through a highly productive period from 2000-2022: during that time, ERP received a new Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development T32 graduate student training grant and many department faculty helped shape the program's research and educational offerings.

Over its long history, ERP researchers and trainees have made important contributions to the field of reproductive endocrinology. From early advances on the nature of the ovarian cycle and normal function of the reproductive system, to key discoveries in preeclampsia, placental imaging, viral infections in pregnancy, to today's additions of big data and single-cell analysis, the ERP has shaped research and education in the field.

## FOCUS ON THE FUTURE

The Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology imagines a future where the most pressing reproductive health questions are met with innovative solutions, where disparities are dismantled, and where the next generation of scientists is trained to lead with excellence and empathy. In pursuit of those goals, the department is working on the development of a Center for Perinatal and Reproductive Health Research.

The next five years will focus on advancing our understanding of disease processes in obstetric, gynecologic and reproductive disorders and gynecologic cancers, developing techniques and technologies for cures, and addressing the root causes of reproductive health disparities.

The Center for Perinatal and Reproductive Health Research will be a beacon of evidence-based practices that set the standard nationwide. From basic research to clinical trials, the Center will provide a comprehensive platform for inquiry and innovation, attracting top talent and fostering collaborations that span disciplines. In the near term, the department's research platform will focus on:

- Expanding the Data Management and Statistics Core to include more support for data acquisition and bioinformatics.
- Strategically recruiting faculty to complement and enhance our basic, translational, clinical and population health research mission.
- Ramping up activities in the Tissue Collections and Processing Core, including banking more tissues and expanding research partnerships with investigators within the Department of Ob-Gyn and beyond.



# STAYING HEALTHY AFTER CHILDBIRTH



Hypertension during pregnancy is a growing concern, affecting as many as one in five pregnancies in Wisconsin. While researchers continue to study the origins of hypertensive disorders and how best to treat them during pregnancy,

**Kara Hoppe, DO, PhD**, associate professor in the Division of

MaternalFetal Medicine, wanted to answer a pressing question: why are so many postpartum patients being readmitted to the hospital within weeks of delivering their babies? And how can we proactively address their care needs to avoid a readmission in the first place?

“There’s a misconception that if someone had high blood pressure or preeclampsia during pregnancy, that delivering the baby will cure it,” says Dr. Hoppe. “But hypertension in the postpartum period is one of the largest contributors to morbidity and mortality. We need to stay connected with people for the six weeks after birth, which is one of the highest-risk periods.”

Dr. Hoppe created the [Staying Healthy After Childbirth](#) program, originally funded by a grant from the UnityPoint Health-Meriter Hospital Foundation in 2017, to help people stay on top of their postpartum health. In the initial phases of the project, patients who had high blood pressure during pregnancy or delivery went home with a blood pressure monitor, tablet, and instructions to take their blood pressure twice a day. Their vital signs were reviewed by a team of nurses, who could prescribe or adjust blood pressure medication or offer other treatment options if any measurements were concerning. When the program started, hospital readmissions due to high blood pressure were around four to five percent. With STAC in operation, readmissions were reduced to 1.5 percent or lower, enough that Meriter Hospital made STAC remote hypertension monitoring the standard of care for everyone with high blood pressure who delivers there. This includes not

just patients delivered by UW Department of Ob-Gyn providers, but also those who work with private practices in Madison and people who transfer from rural hospitals or other hospitals in the region. In follow-up surveys, past patients in the program overwhelmingly recommended participating in this intervention; 95% of respondents said they would rather participate in home monitoring than go into a hospital or clinic for postpartum blood pressure care.

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## WHAT PATIENTS SAY

*“I felt like this program really was very good for my health and my wellbeing because I wouldn’t have been knowing which medicines to switch or add on or take off.”*

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Since STAC became standard of care in 2019, it has made tremendous progress both in patient experience and in funding support. “Patients can use their phones now to connect to their blood pressure machines and send readings,” Dr. Hoppe says. “We no longer have equipment issues that used to be a limiting factor for how many people could be enrolled in the program at a time. This allows STAC to really be standard of care in our hospital.” STAC also has a large team of nurses who connect with patients, monitor their readings, and manage their care.



In 2020, Dr. Hoppe received a \$150,000 [Wisconsin Partnership Program New Investigator Grant](#) to help address the postpartum needs of Black patients. This grant, in collaboration with Harambee Village Doula, expanded the remote hypertension monitoring program to include prenatal and postpartum doula services and connections to lactation, mental health, and other services for patients with chronic hypertension and other hypertension disorders of pregnancy.

Dr. Hoppe plans to expand STAC in exciting ways. STAC was funded in all three phases of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Office on Women's Health [Hypertension Innovator Award Competition](#), with new grants in 2021, 2023, and 2024 totaling \$225,000. Additionally, Dr. Hoppe received a \$150,000 grant from UPH-Meriter Foundation to conduct a randomized controlled trial to determine if health coaching can increase 12-month postpartum care visits, hypertension control, and hypertension self-management behavior.

In 2024, Dr. Hoppe's STAC program became the [Core Research Project](#) for the [UW-Madison Prevention Research Center](#) (PRC), a US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention-funded center focused on maternal and child health. With PRC funding of \$600,000 a year over five years, Dr. Hoppe seeks to reduce racial health disparities and improve maternal and infant health outcomes for Black women by offering blood pressure monitoring during pregnancy to catch more instances of hypertension, and work with community-based partners such as doula organizations and public health departments to bring the program outside of hospital and clinic walls.

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## WHAT PATIENTS SAY

*"I really enjoyed like having a doula this time around because she supported me through a lot of stuff like other than just my blood pressures."*

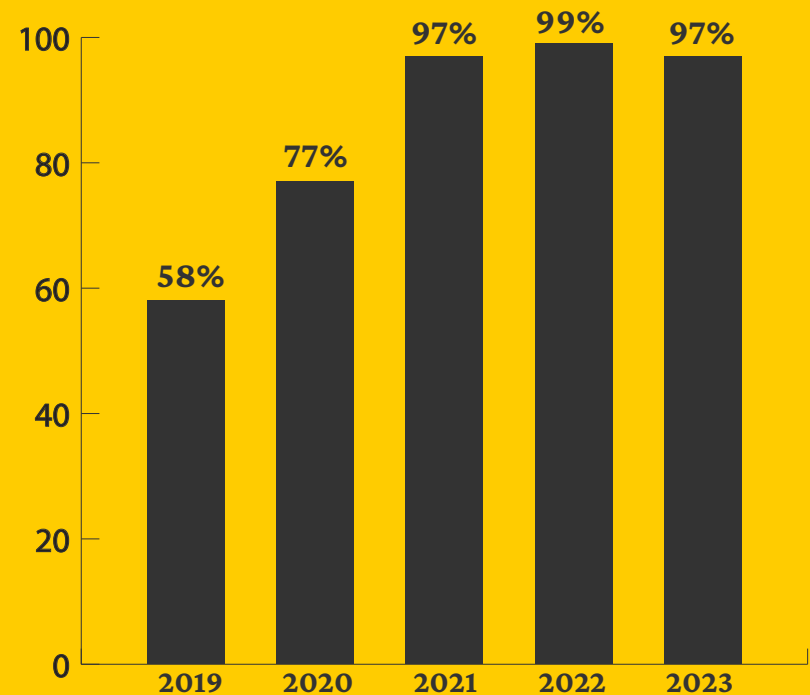
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## STAC IMPACTS (2019-23)



# 5,845

patients enrolled



Percentage of patients with hypertension enrolled in STAC

<http://stacathome.org>



# OVARIAN CANCER TREATMENT AND PREVENTION

Though not the most common form of gynecologic cancer, ovarian cancer has a comparatively high mortality rate due in part to challenges with early detection and a paucity of effective treatments. Researchers in the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology are investigating a novel use of a common medication that may have the potential to change that.



*Manish Patankar, PhD, presenting at a lab meeting*

It all started with ginger. “We learned about a colleague making an extract from ginger root,” says **Manish Patankar, PhD**, Director of the Division of Reproductive Sciences. “We started testing it for anticancer activities and realized there were specific molecules in the ginger extract that we thought were active against cancer cells.”

Not every molecule can be successfully translated into medication, which was the case with the compound found in ginger extract. Dr. Patankar and his lab looked to the literature to find similar molecules that might be more successful as medications, which led them to atovaquone, a longstanding antimalarial treatment commonly used around the world. In early studies, the researchers found that exposing high grade serous ovarian cancer (HGSC) cells to atovaquone increased expression of p53, a gene that can

stop or slow formation of tumors. If atovaquone can increase activity in a tumor suppressor gene, researchers wondered if it could be taken one step further and applied as a cancer preventative.

Cancer prevention treatments have incredible potential in improving outcomes for people with hereditary cancers, including ovarian cancer caused by BRCA gene mutations. The current option for lowering cancer risk in BRCA patients can involve prophylactically removing ovaries, which induces menopause.

“The idea that we could maybe delay menopause even a few years by having patients take a drug like this is plausible,” says **Lisa Barroilhet, MD, MS**, Director of the Division of Gynecologic Oncology. “There’s a big difference between going through surgical menopause at age 40 versus 45 or 45 versus 50. Delaying could give people time to complete their families and avoid the very real health risks of early menopause.”



*Lisa Barroilhet, MD, MS, and graduate student Mayra Betancourt Ponce discuss lab notes*



Dr. Barroilhet and Dr. Patankar work closely together on many current atovaquone projects; they and their research teams continue to advance the field through a variety of funding support. Dr. Barroilhet received a \$1.6 million National Institutes of Health R01 grant in 2020 for the project *Repurposing Atovaquone for the Prevention of Ovarian Cancer*. Dr. Patankar is principal investigator on a \$154,000 grant from the Veterans Administration for the project *Using a chemical biology approach to develop novel inhibitors of mitochondrial oxidative phosphorylation for the treatment of ovarian cancer*.

As the core research team in the Department of Ob-Gyn investigating atovaquone, Dr. Patankar and Dr. Barroilhet have connected with more collaborators in the department and beyond. In 2024, Dr. Barroilhet and Dr. Patankar became coinvestigators on a [Wisconsin Partnership Program grant](#) for \$600,000 led by Jenny Gumperz, PhD, professor in the UW School of Medicine and Public Health Department of Medical Microbiology and

Immunology using tissue and fluid samples from patients with HGSC to create new immunotherapy treatment options. Historically, immunotherapy has not been very effective against ovarian cancers. The research group hopes to use atovaquone to change the way tumors behave and create more proteins or antigens for immunotherapy treatments to target.

In the future, Dr. Barroilhet and Dr. Patankar look forward to collaborating with [María Virumbrales-Muñoz, PhD](#), who joined the Division of Reproductive Sciences in 2023. “She’s already helping us consider organoid models and other ways we can test how atovaquone might change how cells work,” says Dr. Barroilhet. “I’m excited about the range of other immune-related interactions that can be test tested on her model as well.”



## DIVING DEEPER WITH NOVEL TECHNIQUES

Dr. Virumbrales-Muñoz’s interests in female reproductive biology have led her to propose novel organ-on-a-chip models to study the pathogenesis and treatment of ovarian cancer and endometriosis, two major gynecologic diseases that cannot be successfully treated using current therapeutic approaches. Organ-on-a-chip models are small, microfluidic 3-D models that can simulate the activities, mechanics, and physiological responses of organs or organ systems, offering a valuable research step between cell cultures and animal models.



# COLLABORATIVE FOR REPRODUCTIVE EQUITY



CORE Director **Jenny Higgins, PhD, MPH;**  
CORE Associate Director **Amy Williamson, MPP**

At a time with increasing and ever-changing barriers to reproductive health, understanding how policies affect patient and provider experiences with reproductive health care is more critical than ever. The [UW Collaborative for Reproductive Equity](#) (CORE), established in 2018 with a \$573,142 grant from a large family foundation, conducts research and shares evidence that focuses on Wisconsinites' access to abortion and contraception.

As a multidisciplinary research collective, CORE brings faculty and trainees from departments across the UW–Madison campus – as well as other universities in Wisconsin – together to investigate the barriers and supports to reproductive autonomy in the state.

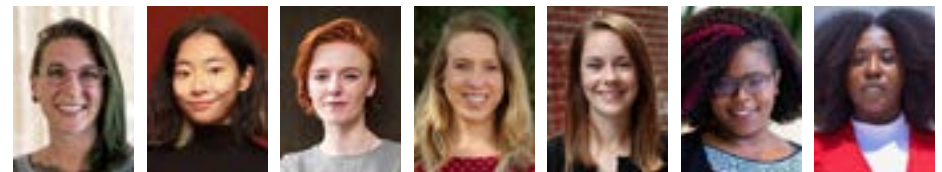
“We have an incredible group of rigorous scientists building a trove of information and evidence in order to be of service to state-based programs, policymakers and others,” says CORE Director **Jenny Higgins, PhD, MPH**. “Our founding goal was to disseminate and translate research on abortion and contraception that can support people and organizations working to promote reproductive health equity and access.”

Early projects from CORE examined the ways limitations to abortion and contraception access impacted peoples' lives, patient and provider experience with medication abortion, physician attitudes towards abortion access, patient experiences with religious restrictions on reproductive health care,

the impacts of abortion clinic closures in Wisconsin on access to clinics, and more. Throughout, CORE and its researchers worked in collaboration with community-based organizations, advocacy organizations, public health departments, healthcare support organizations and providers, professional associations, and legal and policy experts to evaluate the effectiveness of CORE research briefs and other resources and adapt them to better meet partner needs.

When the 2022 U.S. Supreme Court decision in *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization* overturned federal abortion protections, CORE's work became even more urgent. “*Dobbs* was really galvanizing,” says Dr. Higgins. “The drive was even higher to share what we know about the impact of abortion restrictions on infant and maternal mortality.”

Dr. Higgins and her team competed successfully in 2023 to obtain a nearly \$6 million grant renewal to continue this important work. CORE's focus moving forward will include supporting development for graduate students and postdoctoral trainees who are interested in careers researching abortion and contraception; intentionally investing in relationships with community partners to support reproductive equity in Wisconsin; and continuing to conduct rigorous reproductive equity research to support education and policy around the state.



*Elizabeth Albert; Taehyun Kim; Madison Lands; Meghan Lepisto;  
Jane Seymour; Zakiyyah Sorensen; Mfonobong Ufot*



## CURRENT CORE PROJECTS LED BY DEPARTMENT OF OB-GYN FACULTY

### **When Pregnancies Become Complicated: Consequences of *Dobbs* for Patients and Ob-Gyn Physicians in Wisconsin**

This project will document and analyze how the post-*Dobbs* legal landscape impacts ob-gyns' ability to provide care to patients needing abortion for medical reasons and to deliver routine pregnancy care to patients in abortion-adjacent settings in Wisconsin. *Abigail Cutler, MD, MPH; Eliza Bennett, MD; Laura Jacques, MD; Jenny Higgins, PhD, MPH*

### **What Factors Shape Black People's Revealed Abortion Method Preferences?**

This mixed-method research project will identify how reproductive-aged Black people value the abortion method relative to other care attributes and the structural and legal barriers that can shape those preferences. *Tiffany Green, PhD; Adrienne Ghorashi, JD; Jane Seymour, PhD, MPH; Laura Swan, PhD, MSW; Hoa Vu, PhD*

### **Evidence-Based Monitoring of Abortion Clinics and Funds in Wisconsin and Bordering States: Tracking Trends and Gaps in Care**

This project will collect monthly data from clinics in Wisconsin and bordering states and from abortion funds to maintain and grow a real-time database of 1) the number, type, and gestational age of abortions obtained by Wisconsin residents and 2) the numbers and types of requests for financial or logistical support from Wisconsin abortion seekers. *Jenny Higgins, PhD, MPH; Madison Lands, MSW, MPH; Jane Seymour, PhD, MPH*

### **Experiences of Wisconsinites Who Consider or Seek Abortion in a post-Roe Wisconsin: Impacts on Health and Wellbeing**

This project will document the health, wellbeing, and social consequences of Wisconsinites restricted from obtaining desired abortion services. *Jenny Higgins, PhD, MPH; Elizabeth Albert, MA; Madison Lands, MSW, MPH; Leigh Senderowicz ScD, MPH; Jane Seymour, PhD, MPH; Mfonobong Ufot, BS*

### **Measuring Contraceptive Access at the Population Level Using Novel Survey Items**

This project centers around developing concise, novel survey items that directly measure contraceptive access at the population level based on self-reported reasons for nonuse. *Leigh Senderowicz ScD, MPH; Alexa DeBoth, MPH, MPA; Jenny Higgins, PhD, MPH; Mireille Perzan, MPH; Fiona Weeks, MSPH*

## BY THE NUMBERS



77

Peer-reviewed publications



9

Research briefs



34

Topical briefs



# DIVISION OF ACADEMIC SPECIALISTS IN OBSTETRICS AND GYNECOLOGY



**Amy Domeyer-Klenske, MD**  
*Division Director*

The Division of Academic Specialists in Obstetrics and Gynecology is a group of more than 40 physicians, advanced practice providers, and certified nurse midwives who offer comprehensive obstetrics and gynecology services at several sites around Madison.



*Front: Jordan Ward; Jennifer Karnowski; Laura Kwitek; Hannah Copp; Krystal Boardman; Emily Behrend  
Second row: Kristen Sharp; Carley Zeal; Bridget Kelly; Anna Yearous-Algozin; Anastasia Doherty; Kasey Miller; Olga Fajardo  
Third row: Katherine Sampene; Kristina Krueger; Nicole Shapiro; Kate Sample; Molly Lepic; Denise Fryzelka  
Fourth row: Anna Habermeyer; Jacqueline Wolff-Ellison; Ann Baggot; Katie O'Brien; Awa Sanneh; Leslie Smith  
Back row: Cassandra Liss; Division Director Amy Domeyer-Klenske; Abigail Cutler; Ryan McDonald; Abigail Nelezen; Anne Lindstrom  
Not pictured: India Anderson-Carter; Kim Bannon; Eliza Bennett; Laura Bozzuto; Luther Gaston; Patrice Grzebielski; Laura Hanks; Emelle Holmes-Drammeh; Laura Jacques; Camille Ladanyi; Alison Ladner; Jay Lick; Ryan Luellwitz; Nicole Michler; Teresa Reed; Melinda Rose; Kelly Ruse; Roxanne Wright*



*ASOG Medical Program Assistants: Rani Achirreddy; Jen Ferry; Chelsea Gatica; Erin Mairs; Kay Weeden-Clemente*



## MINIMALLY INVASIVE GYNECOLOGIC SURGERY

As surgical techniques advance, patients have more options for less invasive gynecologic surgeries, which can offer the benefit of less pain and faster recovery times. Our skilled ASOG faculty surgeons have been offering minimally invasive gynecologic surgery (MIGS) options to many patients for decades. In the past five years, the division recruited two faculty with additional subspecialty fellowship training in MIGS to increase the number of patients that can benefit from this approach.



**Camille Ladanyi, MD**, joined the Department of Ob-Gyn in 2020 and brought extensive training and exposure in advance laparoscopic and robotic techniques. Her research focuses on improving diagnosis and care for endometriosis and recovery after minimally invasive gynecologic surgery.



**Olga Fajardo, MD**, joined the Department in 2023. During her fellowship, she developed the National FMIGS Didactic Education Curriculum, which launched in 2022 to provide MIGS fellowship programs with a two-year, standardized education curriculum.

Intentional expansion of our division's MIGS resources not only offers more options for patients, it also increases faculty support for refining MIGS techniques, helps our residents and trainees strengthen their MIGS skills, and opens up new opportunities for research about the effectiveness, safety, and outcomes of MIGS procedures. The MIGS team will move to the Eastpark Medical Center in 2025, with the goal of establishing a multidisciplinary endometriosis and pelvic pain clinic once there.

## EARLY PREGNANCY ASSESSMENT CLINIC

When people experience complications or issues in early pregnancy, it's crucially important to understand what's happening and make a plan to address it as quickly as possible. The 2022 United States Supreme Court ruling in *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization* created additional hurdles for people looking for abortion care in Wisconsin, making it even more critical that people with concerns in early pregnancy can get answers swiftly.

At the UW Health [Early Pregnancy Assessment Clinic](#) (EPAC), faculty provide timely evaluations and care for patients experiencing issues like bleeding and cramping, ectopic pregnancy or pregnancy of unknown location, suspected miscarriage, and other complications.



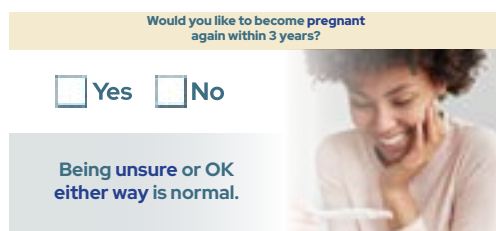
**Eliza Bennett, MD, Abigail Cutler, MD, MPH, and Laura Jacques, MD**, are the main physicians in the EPAC. They have also coalesced as a Family Planning section in recent years, focusing significant energy on research and education:

Dr. Bennett, Dr. Cutler, and Dr. Jacques are all investigators in the UW Collaborative for Reproductive Equity, participating in research on physician and patient perceptions of and experiences with abortion care in pre- and post-*Dobbs* Wisconsin.

Dr. Jacques conducted a series of [Values Clarification and Transformation](#) (VCAT) workshops with more than 500 Midwestern medical students and ob-gyn residents to understand their attitudes and beliefs about abortion.



## AUTONOMY AND EMPOWERMENT IN THE POSTPARTUM PERIOD



After receiving feedback about contraceptive counseling in the perinatal period, **Katherine Sampene, MD**, launched a postpartum contraception counseling optimization project.

Dr. Sampene sought community, patient, and provider input on ideal timing for contraceptive counseling, person-centered language, and resources to help patients understand their options.

In 2023, Dr. Sampene [published a worksheet](#) with prompts to help patients think through their values and preferences around birth control, as well as a handout that compares many common methods of birth control in terms of effectiveness, side effects, impacts on breastfeeding, and more. The resources – available in English and Spanish – are co-sponsored by the UW School of Medicine and Public Health Departments of Ob-Gyn and Family Medicine and Community Health, as well as four other ob-gyn practices around Madison.

## NOTEWORTHY



In 2020, **Luther Gaston, MD**, earned the UW Health Physician Excellence Rising Star – Clinical Educator Award, given to outstanding teachers with an emphasis on teaching residents and medical students, as well as other interdisciplinary team members, and patients and families.



**Emelle Holmes-Drammeh, PA**, received the Jerry Noack Friend of the Program Award from the UW School of Medicine and Public Health Physician Assistant Program in 2023! The award recognizes significant and impactful contributions to the success of the PA Program.



In 2024, **Laura Jacques, MD**, became the medical director of the Wisconsin Department of Health Services Title X Reproductive Health and Family Planning grant. In that role, she oversees the provision of comprehensive family planning, reproductive health and sexual health services across the state.



**Ryan Luellwitz, DO** is completing a one-year fellowship in critical care medicine with the goal of expanding obstetric critical care services in the department.



**India Anderson-Carter, MD**, joined the Department of Ob-Gyn faculty in 2024; in addition to her academic and clinical roles, Dr. Anderson-Carter is the department's first-ever Director of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion.

## FOCUS ON THE FUTURE

The Division of Academic Specialists in Ob-Gyn look forward to expanding their capacity in research, education, and clinical care in the coming years:

- Establish and implement a Surgical Partnership program to further develop operative skills in Department of Ob-Gyn.
- Cultivate a diverse portfolio of research, including recruiting faculty with more emphasis on research.
- Further incorporate APPs and CNMs in subspecialty programs, including Menopause, MIGS, Hope After Loss, and Vulvar Clinics.
- Increase academic output in the division, including peer-reviewed publications and local and national presentations.
- Expand contraceptive access through a Contraceptive E-Visit option, allowing patients to renew their contraception without an office visit.
- Expand metabolic health offerings for ob-gyn patients through Kate Sample, MD's special clinic focused on obesity and lifestyle medicine.



## ADVOCACY IN ACTION



**Amy Domeyer-Klenske, MD**, arrived in 2023 to serve as director of the Division of Academic Specialists in Ob-Gyn, bringing her leadership skills and connections to the Department. She was the chair of the Wisconsin Section of the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG) from 2022-24, during which time she led statewide advocacy efforts for some of Wisconsin's most pressing reproductive health issues. This advocacy work has propelled her to a regional leadership role as the Legislative Chair for ACOG District 6 which includes several Midwestern states.



**Laura Hanks, MD**, became the ACOG Wisconsin Section Legislative Chair in 2024, focusing on recommendations for state-level advocacy that impacts ob-gyn providers and patients.



Division of Academic Specialists in Ob-Gyn faculty are frequent attendees of the **ACOG Congressional Leadership Conference**, during which they visit legislators and advocate for maternal-child health alongside Department of Ob-Gyn residents and fellows.

## BY THE NUMBERS



# 90

Peer-reviewed publications (2019-2024)



# 13,821

Presentations (2021-2024)



# 5,270

Surgeries (2021-2024)



# 13.8k

Babies delivered (2020-2024)



# 85.9k

Outpatient visits (2020-2024)



# DIVISION OF GYNECOLOGIC ONCOLOGY



**Lisa Barroilhet, MD, MS**  
Division Director



*Front row, l-r: Rachel Mojdehbakhsh; Amber Peppler; Anne Mayer; Catherine Zhang; Division Director Lisa Barroilhet; Wendy Beers; Amy Gray; JoAnne Martin-Koob; Aimee Huey. Second row, l-r: Cortney Wood; Amie Montsma-Riel; Julia Miller; Megan Peterson; Sumer Wallace; Melanie Hall; Ellen Hartenbach; Melanie Judd; Robin Christianson; Julia Gelissen; Madison Annen. Back row, l-r: Julia Miller; Susan Tierney; David Kushner; Ryan Spencer; Toni Neitzel; Stephen Rose; Laura Huffman; Janelle Sobecki; Matt Wagar; Dan Wellner. Providers not pictured: Joanne Rash; Jessica Wallis-Bhyravabotla*

The UW Department of Ob-Gyn Division of Gynecologic Oncology is the largest gynecologic oncology service in the state. Nine division faculty work with six advanced practice providers to offer state-of-the-art care in prevention, diagnosis, and treatment of gynecologic cancer.

The Division of Gynecologic Oncology is committed to exceptional education and training: medical students and residents learn the intricacies of caring for patients with cervical, vulvar, vaginal, uterine, and ovarian cancer while rotating with gynecologic oncology physicians and advanced practice providers.

Graduates from the Gynecologic Oncology fellowship program go on to be clinician-scientists, leaders, healers, policy-makers, consultants, and researchers across the country.

Research in the division helps advance our understanding of every aspect of gynecologic cancer. Projects focus on developing more sensitive screenings to detect cancer sooner; expanding surgical and medical treatment options; improving quality of life during and after cancer treatment; and even preventing disease before it starts. Division faculty enroll patients across 18 current prospective studies open to patients with female pelvic cancer in our clinical trials program at the UW Carbone Cancer Center.



## UNDERSTANDING SURVIVORSHIP



As gynecologic cancer detection and treatment improve, people with gynecologic cancers are living longer after their treatments. Understanding the long-term impacts of cancer treatments on their physical and emotional wellbeing is crucial for improving their quality of life.

The UW Health [Women's Integrative Sexual Health](#) (WISH) program, led by medical director **Janelle Sobecki, MD, MS**, serves women diagnosed with any type of cancer who have sexual health concerns during or after treatment. Dedicated advanced practice providers **Joanne Rash, PA, Megan Peterson, NP, and Lori Seaborne, PA**, meet with patients, evaluate their concerns, and develop care plans to help address their needs. Patients can be connected to services like pelvic floor physical therapy, behavioral health therapists, and more.

Dr. Sobecki is investigating bone health following cancer treatments. She became a UW Building Interdisciplinary Research Careers in Women's Health (BIRWCH) Scholar in 2023 to expand her research on bone health in gynecologic cancer survivors. She was named the inaugural Ginny Wolfe Faculty Fellow of Ovarian Cancer Research in 2024 to support this work and her role as Director of Gynecologic Oncology clinical trials.

## NOTEWORTHY



**Lisa Barroilhet, MD, MS**, has enjoyed many exciting accomplishments over the last few years. In 2020, she became the first-ever [Dolores A. Buchler, MD, Professor in Gynecologic Oncology](#), providing protected time and funding in support of her research priorities. She served as interim Chair of the Department of Ob-Gyn from March-September 2022, during a time of change and challenge related to restrictions on reproductive rights. She received the [Group on Women in Medicine and Science Impact Award](#) in 2022 in honor of her outstanding service as interim chair.



**Stephen Rose, MD**, continues to expand his leadership roles: in 2022, Dr. Rose became the [UW Health Medical Director for Regional Oncology Services](#). He received the 2023 UW Health [Regional Services Physician Excellence Award](#) for his work in that role. After nearly seven years as division director, Dr. Rose stepped down in 2023 to become the UW Health Medical Director, Strategy and Growth, an institution-wide leadership position.



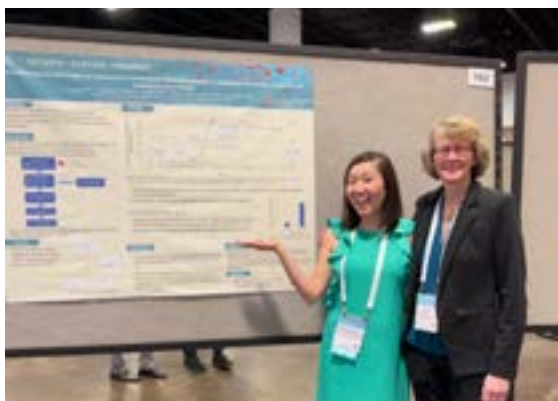
**Ryan Spencer, MD, MS**, received the Society of Gynecologic Oncologists (SGO) [Congressional Ambassador Award](#), given annually to SGO members who have worked hard to educate elected and appointed officials in Washington, DC, to promote health care policy changes and annual federal funding increases to positively impact the field of gynecologic oncology. He was also recently appointed [Associate Designated Institutional Officer](#) at UW Health's Graduate Medical Education office, where he will help provide oversight and administration of each of UW Health's ACGME-accredited programs.



## FOCUS ON THE FUTURE

Moving forward, the Division of Gynecologic Oncology plans to:

- Continue growth of translational and clinical research programs, including expanding projects into areas of interest identified by the National Cancer Institute.
- Invest in career development for faculty to align with their interests in education, leadership, and research.
- Improve access to clinical services by expanding offerings at outreach sites in Illinois and relocating our ambulatory practice and chemotherapy infusion center to Eastpark Medical Center in Madison.



## BY THE NUMBERS



# 140

Peer-reviewed publications (2019-2024)



# 268

Presentations (2019-2024)



# 1,969

New cancer cases (2020-2023)



# 27.4k

Outpatient visits (2020-2024)



# 4,775

Surgeries (2020-2024)



# DIVISION OF MATERNAL-FETAL MEDICINE



**Janine Rhoades, MD**  
Division Director

*Front, l-r: Kara Hoppe; Division Director Janine Rhoades; Sheba McCants; Dani Lai; Katy Hallman  
Second row, l-r: Erin Bailey; Michael Beninati; Katharina Stewart; Jacqueline Powell  
Back, l-r: Scott Infusino; Jacquelyn Adams; J. Igor Iruretagoyena  
Not pictured: Ashley Berka; Kelly Pappas*

The Division of Maternal-Fetal Medicine is a dynamic and growing academic division balancing excellence in teaching, clinical care, and research in the setting of a world-class university. Seven faculty and three fellows in the division are active participants in local and national research; lead educational efforts within the department and the UW School of Medicine and Public Health; and, along with four advanced practice providers, care for people with high-risk pregnancies, including developing surgical programs of distinction.





## IMPROVING SURGICAL CARE FOR COMPLEX PREGNANCIES

Caring for people with high-risk pregnancies is the core mission of the Division of Maternal-Fetal Medicine. Sometimes, the best plan of care includes complex surgeries. These surgeries can address issues for both the pregnant patient and the fetus. Over the last several years, the Division of Maternal-Fetal Medicine has strengthened its reputation for excellence in surgical care.

In 2022, UW Health launched the [Fetal Diagnosis and Treatment Center](#) in partnership with the UnityPoint Health-Meriter Hospital Center for Perinatal Care. **Michael Beninati, MD**, has been the co-director of the Fetal Diagnosis and Treatment Center since 2022 and became the interim director in 2024. Maternal-Fetal Medicine faculty and trainees work in coordination with pediatric surgeons, neonatologists, anesthesiologists, and other experts to provide outstanding care to people with high-risk pregnancies, including fetal cardiac care, multiple gestation, growth restrictions, other fetal genetic conditions, and fetal anomalies.

The Maternal-Fetal Medicine team has also expanded their abilities in surgical management of placenta accreta in recent years. **Erin Bailey, MD, MS**, focused on these complex surgeries during her time as a maternal-fetal medicine fellow in the department and plans to expand the placenta accreta spectrum program as a new member of the faculty.

Department of Ob-Gyn trainees, especially residents and maternal-fetal medicine fellows, are active participants in the management and care of patients in both the Fetal Diagnosis and Treatment Center and the placenta accreta spectrum program, greatly expanding their surgical skills and knowledge. These valuable training opportunities pay off: for example, maternal-fetal medicine fellow **Scott Infusino** will go on to a fetal surgery fellowship after graduating from our program in 2025!

## BRINGING THE WISCONSIN IDEA TO LIFE

Applying the research, resources, and expertise of the University of Wisconsin to improve the lives of people in our state and beyond is a core tenet of the university. In the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology, serving clinics and communities in the region is part of our commitment to the Wisconsin Idea.

Faculty from the Division of Maternal-Fetal Medicine bring the latest in evidence-based medicine to outreach partnerships with clinics in Illinois and Wisconsin:

- Physicians travel weekly to the **UW Health Northern Illinois Women and Children's Hospital** in Rockford to assist the maternal-fetal medicine providers there. While in Rockford, they provide ultrasounds and consults, helping the UW Health Northern Illinois team meet the needs of their high patient volume and standardizing the care patients receive across the UW Health system.
- Since 2023, faculty have traveled once a month to the **Peter Christensen Health Center** in the Lac du Flambeau Band of Lake Superior Chippewa reservation, where they staff a prenatal care clinic. Physicians provide whatever care is most in need on each visit, from consulting for high-risk conditions, to taking and reading ultrasounds, to connecting patients with substance use to supportive resources in the community and beyond.





## NOTEWORTHY



**Jacquelyn Adams, MD, MS**, became co-chair of the Wisconsin Department of Health Services Maternal Mortality Review Team in 2023, where she raises awareness of pregnancy-associated deaths and makes recommendations to eliminate preventable maternal deaths in Wisconsin.



**Igor Iruretagoyena, MD, MS**, has cultivated a career as a physician leader. He was a member of the first UW Health Physician Leadership Development Program cohort in 2020, received the UW Health Physician Excellence – Clinical Practice Award in 2021, and became the Department of Ob-Gyn [Vice Chair of Finance](#) in 2023.



**Kara Hoppe, DO, PhD**, co-authored high-profile research on hypertension. She published the [My Hypertension Education and Reaching Target \(MyHEART\)](#) study in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* in 2023. As a site investigator on the Chronic Hypertension and Pregnancy (CHAP) trial, Dr. Hoppe has co-authored five articles in the *Green Journal* about the study. CHAP received the [2022 David Sackett Annual Trial of the Year Award](#) from the Society for Clinical Trials.

## FOCUS ON THE FUTURE

The Division of Maternal-Fetal Medicine is busy and in demand, serving a high volume of patients in Madison and outreach sites around the region. In the future, the division hopes to:

- Recruit more faculty to increase clinical access and grow clinical programs.
- Pursue a complex obstetrical surgery program to expand on the current placenta accreta spectrum program.
- Support innovation and improve workflows across health systems in the UW Health Fetal Diagnosis and Treatment Center.
- Expand the fellowship program to bolster scholarly output and increase educational opportunities for medical student and ob-gyn residents.
- Increase volume and coverage at outreach sites in Lac du Flambeau, Wisconsin and Rockford, Illinois.



Medical Program Assistants Liz Cavadini; Natalie Duerst; Emalie Stroup

## BY THE NUMBERS



**4,113**

Consults (2020-24)



**96.5k**

Ultrasound visits (2020-24)



**196**

Publications (2019-24)



**4,385**

Outpatient visits (2020-24)



**704**

Deliveries (2020-24)



**179**

Presentations (2019-24)



# DIVISION OF REPRODUCTIVE ENDOCRINOLOGY & INFERTILITY



**Bala Bhagavath, MD**  
*Division Director*

Through a combination of research, education, and clinical care, the Division of Reproductive Endocrinology and Infertility helps individuals and couples develop personalized plans to meet their fertility care and fertility preservation goals.



*Top: Aleksandar Stanic-Kostic; Laura Cooney; Division Director Bala Bhagavath  
Bottom: Jasmin Barthel; Zeki Beyhan; Emma Blazel; Kiley DeHaven; Megan Lyght; Julianne Zweifel*

## MEETING FERTILITY NEEDS THROUGH TRAINING

While the need for fertility services grows, the United States has a shortage of reproductive endocrinology and infertility physicians. In 2024, the Division of Reproductive Endocrinology and Infertility launched an Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education-accredited [Reproductive Endocrinology and Infertility fellowship](#) to help address this shortage. This is the first REI fellowship in the state of Wisconsin and one of only about 40 in the country. Fellows who train with the Division of Reproductive Endocrinology and Infertility will gain a depth of clinical and surgical skills, including completing the American Society for Reproductive Medicine/Society of Reproductive Surgeons Surgical Scholar Track.

Fellows spend time in clinics in other departments, including pediatric and medical

endocrinology, reproductive urology, and genetics. There is a strong focus on LGBTQ+ family planning. Fellows will have the opportunity to see patients at the UW Health multi-disciplinary gender services clinic. Fellows will also complete a mentored basic science, transitional, or clinical research project of their choosing.



*Jayapriya Jayakumaran, MD  
Inaugural Reproductive Endocrinology and Infertility Fellow*



## ADVANCING FERTILITY CARE THROUGH RESEARCH AND CLINICAL INNOVATION



Division of Reproductive Endocrinology and Infertility Director **Bala Bhagavath, MD**, brought a passion for clinical research and industry-sponsored trials when he joined the department in 2020. In recent years, the division has participated in multi-center trials and industry-sponsored trials aimed at improving medical and surgical fertility care. Industry-sponsored trials have included investigations of artificial insemination techniques; medications for patients with endometriosis or fibroids; and treatments to prevent scar tissue in the uterus. In the future, the division plans to participate in studies looking at longer-acting medications for ovarian stimulation during in vitro fertilization (IVF) cycles; novel techniques to encourage ovulation for patients with polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS); and new delivery methods for common fertility medications.

The division has also expanded clinical and surgical services in the last five years:

- Surgical options for patients now include complex fibroid and endometriosis excision, tubal anastomosis and repair, management of developmental anomalies, and Cesarean scar repairs.
- Patients can access a wider range of third-party reproduction services, including fresh or frozen donor eggs and gestational carriers.
- The division can better support fertility preservation for people with a new cancer diagnosis, offering quick access to an IVF cycle before they begin chemotherapy.

## MULTIDISCIPLINARY CARE FOR POLYCYSTIC OVARY SYNDROME



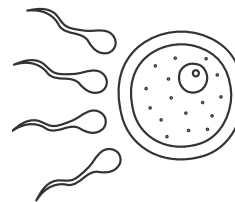
Comprehensive management of PCOS involves experts from many fields, including ob-gyn, endocrinology, behavioral health, nutrition, and more. **Laura Cooney, MD**, leads the UW Health PCOS clinic, which was created specifically to help people address all their PCOS-related concerns and symptoms, whether fertility-related or not. Dr. Cooney's ongoing research aims to better understand the impacts of PCOS on health and improve treatment options. Past and ongoing projects are looking at the role of inflammation in PCOS; comparing fertility treatment options for people with PCOS; evaluating risk for postpartum depression with PCOS; analyzing the effect of PCOS on breastfeeding rates; and more.



In collaboration with **Aleksandar Stanic-Kostic, MD, PhD**, Dr. Cooney has expanded research on personalized IVF treatments for PCOS patients to an additional institution and plans to pursue federal funding.

## A HISTORY OF LEADERSHIP IN ASSISTED REPRODUCTIVE TECHNOLOGY

The University of Wisconsin Hospitals and Clinics has provided Reproductive Endocrinology and Infertility care to people from all parts of the country since 1974. It was the first program in the state of Wisconsin and the fifth in the United



States to offer in vitro fertilization (IVF). In July 1984, the first baby in Wisconsin was born resulting from an IVF procedure. That procedure was performed at the University of Wisconsin. From the beginning of Assisted Reproductive Technology, the University of Wisconsin has been at the forefront of science and continues to be a leader today.



## NOTEWORTHY



**Dr. Cooney** received a 2024 [UW Health Clinical Practice Physician Excellence Award](#), which honors outstanding clinicians who demonstrate an extraordinary commitment to safety and quality patient-and-family centered care. Recipients of this award demonstrate measurable contributions to

clinical practice at UW Health and a strong commitment to the excellence of UW Health.



**Dr. Bhagavath** was accepted into the 2024 cohort of the [UW Health Physician Leadership Development Program](#), which provides training and mentorship to clinical, academic and research leaders in the institution.

In 2021, Dr. Bhagavath founded the [Building Families Alliance of Wisconsin](#) with statewide community partners. The Alliance, which advocates to expand access and remove economic barriers to fertility treatment, has introduced legislation in Wisconsin to mandate insurance coverage for fertility care.

## FOCUS ON THE FUTURE

In addition to training the next generation of REI physicians and helping understand common issues that impact fertility, the Division of Reproductive Endocrinology and Infertility intends to expand in key areas:

- Streamline processes and systems and recruit more REI faculty to improve clinical efficiency and better serve more patients.
- Increase their footprint in the oncofertility space by creating an ovarian tissue cryopreservation program in support of patients with cancers that can affect future fertility.
- Expand the division's research portfolio, including federal funding and industry-sponsored trials.

## BY THE NUMBERS



# 67

Peer-reviewed publications (2019-2024)



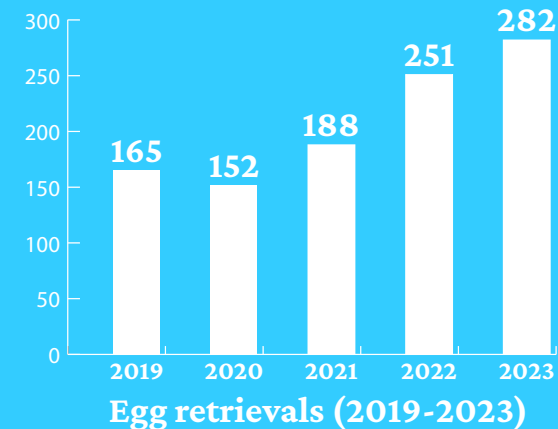
# 74

Presentations (2019-2024)



# 11.4k

Outpatient visits (2019-2024)





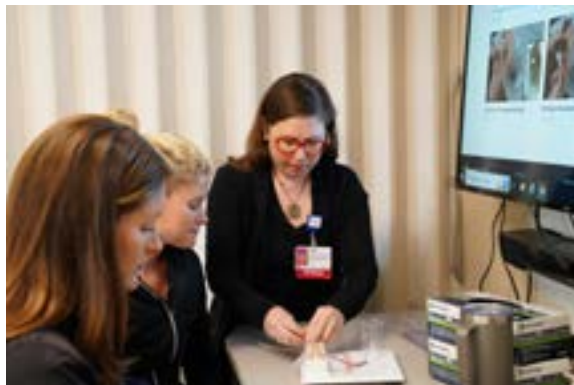
# DIVISION OF UROGYNECOLOGY AND RECONSTRUCTIVE PELVIC SURGERY



**Christine Heisler, MD, MS**  
Division Director

*Top row: Caroline Cox; Dobie Giles; Jon Pennycuff; Margaret Wilkes; Sari Archer; Angela Sergeant; Maureen Sheetz  
Bottom row: Ushma Patel; Kelley Stewart; Julie Dorland; Bailey Schuldt; Tracy Blake*

The Division of Urogynecology and Reconstructive Pelvic Surgery is nationally recognized for its surgical, clinical, and research excellence. In the last five years, division members developed and expanded clinical niches; launched the first [Urogynecology and Reconstructive Pelvic Surgery fellowship](#) in the state; and made significant contributions to the field of urogynecology. The five faculty and three advanced practice providers provide excellent care to patients and are educating the next generation of providers in this important clinical service. The new fellowship is thriving under the direction of fellowship director **Christine Heisler, MD, MS**, and associate fellowship director **Jon Pennycuff, MD, MSPH**.





## EXCELLENCE IN RESEARCH



Urogynecology and Reconstructive Pelvic Surgery fellow **Ushma Patel, MD**, was lead author on a study published in *Urogynecology* that provided an updated estimate of the current prevalence of urinary incontinence for women in the United States. Since its publication in 2022, [Updated Prevalence of Urinary Incontinence in Women: 2015-2018 National Population-Based Survey Data](#) received a Media Impact Award and a 2024 Top Cited Article Award from *Urogynecology*.



**Christine Heisler, MD, MS**, led the field with her research on gender equity in medicine. She was invited to give the lecture *Ready, Set, ACTION! Directions toward Gender Equity in Gynecologic Surgery* at the [2021 Society of Gynecologic Surgeons meeting](#) and received the Best Diversity Paper Award at the 2020 Association of Women Surgeons Annual Conference with the paper [Leading from Behind: Paucity of gender equity statements and policies among professional surgical societies](#).



More than half of older women have incontinence. Interventions to improve symptoms are urgently needed. Former faculty member **Heidi Brown, MD, MS**, researched novel ways of improving incontinence symptoms, which led to the creation of Mind Over Matter, a community-based continence promotion program. In 2021, she earned a \$932,000 NIH R01 grant for the project [Tailoring Online Continence Promotion for Women](#), followed by a \$1.4 million U18 grant in 2022 for the project *Bridging Community-based Continence Promotion and Primary Care (WI-INTUIT)*.

## BY THE NUMBERS



# 85

Peer-reviewed publications (2019-2024)



# 167

Presentations (2021-2024)



# 1,213

Surgeries (2021-2024)



# 15.7k

Outpatient visits (2020-2024)





## NEW CLINIC, NEW CAPACITY

Comprehensive management of pelvic floor disorders includes physicians and providers from multiple specialties. Coordinating that care in a centralized, accessible location is key to improving the patient experience. In November 2024, the Division of Urogynecology and Reconstructive Pelvic Surgery will move their clinic to Eastpark Medical Center, where they will be the cornerstone of a new multispecialty program of distinction as part of UW Health Integrated Specialty Care for Women. Moving to Eastpark will improve collaboration with providers in other specialties, including urology, physical therapy, colorectal surgery, and sexual health. This will allow patients to see a broader variety of providers per visit. In this truly multidisciplinary setting, patients can anticipate timely appointments, smooth coordination between teams, and a broader variety of care readily available.

In addition to the clinical improvements for patients, the Eastpark move will open up new opportunities for academic and research achievements. With clinical research coordinators and research staff onsite, the division will be able to expand participation in a wide variety of trials and projects, continuing to move the field of Urogynecology and Reconstructive Pelvic Surgery forward.

## LEADERSHIP IN THE FIELD



**Dobie Giles, MD, MS, MBA**, was elected to AUGS [Board of Directors](#), serving as treasurer from 2021-2024. During that time, he played a crucial role in the AUGS Practice and Salary Survey conducted and published through the society.



**Christine Heisler, MD, MS**, was a 2023 [Top Reviewer for Urogynecology](#). The journal selects Top Reviewer Award recipients based on their high-quality, timely reviews of articles for the publication.



**Caroline Cox, MD**, was selected in 2024 to lead the Society of Gynecologic Surgeons (SGS) [Pelvic Anatomy Group Digital Library](#). The SGS Digital Library Group disseminates knowledge of female pelvic anatomy, promotes the use of standardized anatomic terminology, and advances the field of gynecologic surgery by creating and maintaining the most anatomically accurate resource for female pelvic anatomy.

## FOCUS ON THE FUTURE

The Division of Urogynecology and Reconstructive Pelvic Surgery has set audacious goals for educational, research, and clinical growth in the coming years:

- Continue to develop new and grow existing multidisciplinary and subspecialty clinical service lines, including clinics for perineal laceration, overactive bladder, vulvar health, and variations of sexual development.
- Adapt the fellowship curriculum to support fellows' individual training goals.
- Increase academic output for faculty and trainees.
- Cultivate a diverse portfolio of research, including recruiting a tenure-track faculty position and collaborating on departmental training grants.



# DIVISION OF REPRODUCTIVE AND POPULATION HEALTH



**Jenny Higgins, PhD, MPH**  
*Division Director*



*Top row: Tiffany Green; Leigh Senderowicz; Claire Wendland  
Bottom row: Elizabeth Albert; Klaira Lerma; Jane Seymour; Laura Swan*

The Division of Reproductive and Population Health is a research division committed to improving reproductive health, wellbeing, and equity through high-quality research and evidence-based programs. In addition to conducting rigorous research in areas like birth equity, contraception, pregnancy and family planning, abortion, and health disparities, members of the division provide leadership to public health initiatives, partner with diverse stakeholders, and translate research into policy and practice.

## CHANGING HOW WE EVALUATE FAMILY PLANNING



**Leigh Senderowicz, ScD, MPH**, is building a distinguished career as a leading scholar in contraceptive autonomy. In 2020, Dr. Senderowicz published an [article outlining contraceptive autonomy](#) - defined as “the factors that need to be in place in order for a person to decide for themselves what they want in regards to contraceptive use, and then to realize that decision” - as a new way of measuring the impact of family planning programs worldwide. That article informed the [2021 Doctors Without Borders Contraceptive Guidelines Toolkit](#), used by the organization’s many providers of global health care.

Seen as a paradigm-shifting scientist in this area, Dr. Senderowicz has been invited to give talks and grand rounds at institutions across the world, from Ohio State University to the Gates Foundation to the London School of Economics.

In 2024, Dr. Senderowicz submitted a K01 grant to the Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development K01 Mentored Research Scientist Career Development Award program for the project *Contraceptive autonomy: A mixed methods approach to developing a novel family planning measure*. The proposal received a perfect score and the \$691,280 project will begin in late 2024.





## RESEARCH FOR REPRODUCTIVE EQUITY

Birth Cost Recovery (BCR) is the practice of billing unmarried, noncustodial fathers for the cost of their child's birth by state Medicaid programs. While many Wisconsin counties continue to collect BCR funds from families, little research examines how BCR programs affect the health and wellbeing of families.

**Tiffany Green, PhD**, through the recently-created [Reproductive Equity Action Lab](#) (REAL), started the community-engaged pilot study *Impacts of Birth Cost Recovery on Black Families in Wisconsin* to better understand families' experiences with health care, child support, and BCR, with the goal of providing new information for decision-makers weighing Birth Cost Recovery's impacts on constituents and for communities to implement asset and evidence-based strategies to improve outcomes.

Dr. Green and other REAL members are also researching the impacts of different states' mandated counseling practices for abortion; Black women's abortion modality preferences; contraceptive coercion; and a multi-state study of the post-*Dobbs* health policy environment and experiences with reproductive health care.

## NOTEWORTHY



In 2022, Division Director **Jenny Higgins, PhD, MPH**, was named the [Jeanne Bissell Professor in Reproductive Health, Rights, and Justice](#). This endowed professorship is awarded to a faculty member whose main focus is research, policies, and programs that support people's right and power to make decisions about their reproductive health and lives. This focus includes evidence-based information and access to the full range of healthcare associated with family planning, including pregnancy termination.



**Tiffany Green, PhD**, received a [2023 University of Wisconsin–Madison Outstanding Women of Color Award](#) for her efforts focused on improving Black maternal health and reducing maternal health and health care disparities in the state of Wisconsin.

In 2024, Dr. Green became the [Gloria E. Sarto MD, PhD Chair in Women's Health and Health Equity Research](#). This endowed chair honors an internationally recognized academic leader at the forefront of research on reproductive health inequities. The income from this endowment supports research and education programs, and services that further these scholarly activities.



In 2022, **Claire Wendland, MD, PhD**, published [Partial Stories: Maternal Death from Six Angles](#) with the University of Chicago Press. By the early 21st century, about one woman in twelve could expect to die of a pregnancy or childbirth complication in Malawi, the site of Dr. Wendland's fieldwork for many years. In this ethnography, Dr. Wendland carefully outlines six evidence-based explanations for such maternal death, creating an important blueprint for addressing maternal mortality crises in the context of economic scarcity.



## FOCUS ON THE FUTURE

Moving forward, the Division of Reproductive and Population Health will continue their work of documenting barriers and facilitators to abortion and contraception care; improved measures of and standards for patient-centered, non-coercive contraceptive care; consequences of abortion denial for people in Wisconsin; and the causes and consequences of maternal health disparities in the state.

- Members of the division will work to secure additional federal research funding through the National Institutes of Health career development, research, and teaching grants.
- To augment the current complement of faculty, the division plans to recruit a researcher with expertise in birth equity who takes a critical approach to pregnancy and birth outcomes.
- Through classes in the medical student curriculum and increased opportunities for postdoctoral research, the division will help expand the UW School of Medicine and Public Health's reputation as a leader in reproductive equity education.
- The division will continue to generate and translate evidence on reproductive health and health equity in Wisconsin and the U.S. through both peer-reviewed research and public-facing materials.

## BY THE NUMBERS



# 197

**Peer-reviewed publications (2019-2024)**



# 125

**Presentations (2021-2024)**



*Jenny Higgins, PhD, MPH, with Department of Ob-Gyn donor Jeanne Bissell at the 2022 UW School of Medicine and Public Health Faculty Investiture Celebration*



# DIVISION OF REPRODUCTIVE SCIENCES



*Front, l-r: Rene Welch Schwartz; Finnbar Reed-McBain; Division Director Manish Patankar; Irene Ong*  
*Second row, l-r: Nicha Boonpatrawong; Deborah Chasman; Stefanie Eggers*  
*Third row, l-r: Luca Clemente; Derek Boeldt; Aubrey Bernard; Paula Manan Mejias; Sejal Sharma; Mayra Betancourt Ponce; Philippos Tsourkas*  
*Back, l-r: Zach Danaceau; Jing Zheng; Krittikas Chaiyakul; Tyson Wheelwright; Tapanmitra Ravi; Aurod Ounsinegad; Heidi Janzen*  
*Faculty not pictured: David Abbott; Ian Bird; Aleksandar Stanic-Kostic; María Virumbrales-Muñoz*

The Division of Reproductive Sciences is a research division focused on understanding the mechanisms behind pregnancy complications, cancer, and other aspects of reproductive health. The faculty, researchers, and trainees in the division conduct interdisciplinary, collaborative biomedical research, connecting colleagues who practice in the clinic with the foundational discoveries happening in the lab.



**Manish Patankar, PhD**  
*Division Director*

## FOCUS ON THE FUTURE

The Division of Reproductive Sciences will continue to prioritize key research areas of gynecologic cancer, preterm birth, endometriosis, and Polycystic Ovarian Syndrome, bringing novel approaches to these issues:

- Faculty will use computational biology, artificial intelligence, data science, genomics, and proteomic approaches to advance research.
- New faculty arrival María Virumbrales-Muñoz, PhD, will lend her expertise to developing microscale models that mimic gynecologic tissues, filling a major unmet need in ob-gyn research.
- The Division will strengthen its strategic collaborations and integrations with partners across campus, including the Wisconsin National Primate Research Center, the University of Wisconsin Paul P. Carbone Comprehensive Cancer Center, the Prevention Research Center, and other units.



## EARLY DETECTION OF OVARIAN CANCER



Since the signs and symptoms of ovarian cancer can be so subtle, finding new ways to detect ovarian cancer earlier could change many lives. In 2022, **Irene Ong, PhD**, and **Manish Patankar, PhD**, received a \$500,000 grant from the University of Wisconsin–Madison Prevention Research Center, funded by the CDC, for the project [\*Harnessing electronic health record to expedite the diagnosis of early-stage ovarian cancer\*](#). With this project, they will work towards developing computational tools to help identify early-stage ovarian cancer and improve patient outcomes.

In collaboration with researchers at the University of Iowa and the University of Minnesota, they will use machine learning models to examine electronic health record data from three Midwestern health care institutions to determine whether demographic and clinical variables, social determinants of health, and high-frequency germline genetic variants can be used to identify early predictors of ovarian cancer.

## INVESTIGATING THE ROOT CAUSE OF PRETERM BIRTH



Better understanding the causes of preterm birth is an important aspect of improving reproductive health outcomes. In 2019, **Aleksandar Stanic-Kostic, MD, PhD**, received a \$500,000 grant from the Burroughs Wellcome Fund Preterm Birth Initiative to support research into the role of innate lymphoid cells in preterm labor.

**Irene Ong, PhD** was recruited in 2017 and served as co-I on the Burroughs Wellcome Fund Preterm Birth Initiative grant. Their rich collaboration incorporating basic research and computational techniques from concept design through analysis has so far yielded three peer-reviewed publications, with three more manuscripts in preparation, and a best poster award at the [\*2021 Annual Meeting of the American Society for Reproductive Immunology\*](#) (ASRI) for *Integration of Disparate Single Cell Data in Decidual Immunology Reveals Restriction of Inflammatory T Cell Fate at the Maternal-Fetal Interface*.





## NOTEWORTHY



In 2021, **David Abbott, PhD**, crowned a distinguished career with exciting accomplishments. He was one of just five educators across UW–Madison to receive the [UW-Madison Award for Mentoring Undergraduates in Research, Scholarly and Creative Activities](#) from the Office of the Provost. That year, he also received the [Ricardo Azziz Distinguished Researcher Award](#) for his outstanding contributions to PCOS research from the Androgen Excess and PCOS Society.



The [Integrated Program in Endocrinology \(iPEnd\)](#), created to foster collaborative research in endocrinology aimed at better understanding the effects of general endocrinology and reproductive endocrinology on human health, expanded in 2021 to include a training grant. The postdoctoral T32 grant, led by **Ian Bird, PhD**, funds both PhD and MD trainees to undertake translational studies in reproductive biology. Research conducted by iPEnd trainees requires a translational step in humans or nonhuman primates.



In 2023, **Jing Zheng, PhD**, co-authored the article *MicroRNA29 differentially mediates preeclampsia-dysregulated cellular responses to cytokines in female and male fetal endothelial cells*, which was selected as the [Editor's Choice](#) in the August 2023 issue of *The Journal of Physiology*.



**Aleks Stanic, MD, PhD**, and **Ted Golos, PhD** received an NIH R21 grant entitled [Gestationally driven trafficking of decidual lymphocytes assessed by serial intravascular staining](#) to study the trafficking of peripheral blood immune cells to the uterine lining in luteal phase and the decidua in pregnancy in rhesus macaques.

## BY THE NUMBERS



# 157

Peer-reviewed publications (2019-2024)



# 117

Presentations (2019-2024)





# OUTREACH AND ADVOCACY



*Front: Cheryl Casey'Grant; Rob Garza; Autumn Hayes; Julia Reeves  
Back: Lily Johnson; Jacquelyn Askins; Jamie Reetz*

Faculty, staff, researchers, and trainees are hard at work to support the Wisconsin Idea – that the boundaries of the university are the boundaries of the state, and the discoveries and innovations on campus should benefit every person in the state.

Clinicians in the Department of Ob-Gyn discuss health research, share tips, and welcome questions at [Healthy Women Community Talks](#), a free, educational series aimed at helping people better understand their own health and health care.

The [Women's Healthcast](#), produced by Senior Communications Director **Jacquelyn Askins**, is one of the most popular ob-gyn podcasts in the country. Each episode explores the latest issues and innovations in reproductive health through interviews with faculty, advanced practice providers and researchers in the Department of Ob-Gyn and beyond. This podcast has listeners in all 50 states and more than 100 countries.

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.

The annual [Diaper Drive](#), led by Outreach Specialist **Cheryl Casey'Grant**, advances the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology's mission is to improve the quality of life for families in our community. The Diaper Drive supports families in the Madison area by collecting monetary donations and distributing diapers to ConnectRx, YWCA, DAIS, River Food Pantry, and other local organizations that support families with infants and toddlers in Madison and Dane County. Since the beginning of the Diaper Drive, the Department has donated over 100,000 diapers!

The Department of Ob-Gyn hosts [multiple events](#) throughout the year, showcasing cutting-edge research in reproductive health. In 2024, one of the department's flagship research events celebrated its 20th anniversary. The [Gloria Sarto Reproductive Health Equity Symposium](#) was renamed in 2024 to honor its founder Gloria Sarto, MD, PhD. The Symposium is a connection point for health care professionals, population health experts, and community advocates who are dedicated to advancing health equity.



## OUTREACH IMPACTS, 2019-2024



**79 Episodes**  
**143,725 Downloads**

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**68**  
**Community events supported**

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**\$136,539.84**  
**Community sponsorships**

## CULTIVATING A CLIMATE OF WELLBEING

Leaders in the Department of Ob-Gyn have invested significant energy in building an inclusive environment that respects, welcomes and embraces differences across all of our missions. Targeted efforts to improve the day-to-day work experience for faculty, staff, providers, and learners has included:

- Launching a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee to provide education and promote policies and practices that support patients, their families and employees.
- Initiating a Peer Support program to provide timely support and resources to clinicians navigating stressful events and patient interactions.
- Integrating Wellness Minutes into department meetings to share mindfulness tips and resources to support physical and emotional wellbeing.

## FOCUS ON THE FUTURE

The Department of Ob-Gyn will work towards achieving health equity in our community and building a culture that supports wellbeing and faculty, staff, provider, and trainee success by:

- Facilitating collaborative, bidirectional learning between community members, scholars, clinicians, and policymakers.
- Strengthening relationships with organizations and individuals focused on improving reproductive health and health equity.
- Fostering a respectful, inclusive, collaborative, and equitable department that empowers individuals to contribute their maximal potential by recruiting a diverse and talented workforce; reporting and addressing microaggressions; and providing equitable, transparent compensation for all faculty, providers, and staff.



# ADVANCING THE OB-GYN MISSION THROUGH PHILANTHROPY

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 obstetrician gynecologists; and advance cutting-edge research.

If you have any questions about making a financial contribution, a planned gift, or establishing a named fund for the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology, please contact our Advancement Manager.



**Lily Johnson**

262-745-1986

[lily.johnson@wisc.edu](mailto:lily.johnson@wisc.edu)

Learn more about the Department of Ob-Gyn advancement priorities and how you can help:



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

## FOCUS ON THE FUTURE

Advancing the field of reproductive health is more important now than ever. From maternal health and pelvic floor disorders to ovarian cancer and other serious medical issues, the UW School of Medicine and Public Health and UW Health are investing in reproductive health with a renewed sense of urgency. Development priorities in the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology include:

- Supporting clinical programs in urogynecology, minimally invasive surgery, gynecologic oncology, and more as they transition to new, state-of-the-art clinics at Eastpark Medical Center.
- Conducting cutting-edge research to detect cancer earlier, discover and develop new treatments, and improve outcomes and quality of life.
- Supporting research and innovation in pelvic floor disorders, birth equity, fertility care, pregnancy complications, and female pelvic cancers.
- Enhancing the department's educational experience by supporting resident wellness, enhancing and updating the simulation lab, expanding rural educational initiatives, and other needs of the residency and fellowship training programs.



## ENDOWING THE FUTURE OF 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.



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

*Ellen M. Hartenbach, MD*

The Ben M. Peckham Chair honor is awarded to an outstanding leader who is recognized for leadership and accomplishment in medical education at medical student, resident and fellowship levels.



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

*Tiffany Green, PhD*

The Gloria E. Sarto MD, PhD Chair in Women's Health and Health Equity Research honors an internationally recognized academic leader at the forefront of women's health research.



**Jeanne Bissell Professor in Reproductive Justice**

*Jenny Higgins, PhD, MPH*

The Jeanne Bissell Professor supports a faculty member whose main educational focus for faculty, residents, students, and staff, as well as their patient care, is in reproductive justice.



**Dennis and Lynn Christensen Professor in Family Planning**

*Eliza A. Bennett, MD*

The Dennis and Lynn Christensen Professor recognizes an academic leader in the field of family planning. This honor goes to the faculty member who is responsible for medical student, resident, and fellow education in contraception, sterilization and pregnancy termination.



**John and Jeanne Flesch Professor in Gynecologic Oncology**

*David M. Kushner, MD*

Jeanne and John Flesch established this fund is to provide financial support for an outstanding faculty member in the Division of Gynecologic Oncology who conducts research in the area of gynecologic cancer.



**Dolores A. Buchler, MD Professor in Gynecologic Oncology**

*Lisa M. Barroilhet, MD, MS*

Dr. Buchler endowed this professorship to support outstanding physicians and scientists in the Division of Gynecologic Oncology focused on research.



**Ginny Wolfe Faculty Fellow of Ovarian Cancer Research**

*Janelle Sobecki, MD, MS*

This new faculty fellowship is intended to advance ovarian cancer clinical trials research at the University of Wisconsin Carbone Cancer Center.





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