

Women in Academic Medicine Event Celebrates Accomplishments

They knew they were nominated, but none knew for sure who would win. Before a standing-room-only crowd, six women faculty members from specialties across the University of Miami Miller School of Medicine received recognition at the Women in Academic Medicine (WIAM) event on January 31. They stood one by one to receive awards for career achievement, mentorship, leadership or their role as trailblazers.



Recognition of 26 recently promoted women faculty members was another highlight of the evening.

Another seven women trainees won Committee of Interns & Residents (CIR) awards. These residents and fellows were acknowledged for outstanding research, patient care, and for advancing the field of medicine for women, among other honors.

The air of celebration for what these women accomplished in their medical careers so far was tempered somewhat by results of a Miller School faculty survey out just days before. The survey revealed a discrepancy between female and male faculty: women were much more likely than men to perceive gender bias against women regarding career progression at the medical school.

Henri R. Ford, M.D., MHA, dean and chief academic officer of the Miller School, addressed these survey findings as he kicked off the WIAM Evening of Fellowship, Awards and Recognition.

“We have spent the last several days studying the results of our faculty survey. Clearly there is discordance between the way we men see things and the way women faculty perceive their ability to progress through our institution,” Dr. Ford said.



Dean Henri Ford speaks at the WIAM event.

“Let’s work together — this is a partnership,” he said. “I am committed to making sure we have an optimal learning and practice environment.”

Institutional and cultural barriers will need to be addressed, he added. “I am eagerly looking forward to working with you to find the right solutions we can implement to transform the culture at the Miller School of Medicine.

“We are embarking on a journey to a new culture — a new culture that will promote excellence across all genders throughout the entire university and medical school,” Dr. Ford continued. “The success of this institution will be measured by the success of women in academic medicine.”

“We still have a long way to go,” said WIAM President Rose van Zuilen, Ph.D., but she shared a bit of positive news as well. Of the faculty promoted in 2018, 27 were women and 41 were men. This 40/60 female/male ratio approached equity with the gender proportions within the faculty overall, which is approximately 36 percent women and 64 percent men.

“Of course we’d like to see more women promoted, and we have a little catching up to do,” she added. “Dean Ford’s commitment to change ... I think it’s part of being an ethical leader — his urgency to address the issue right away.”

Next, Hilit F. Mechaber, M.D., associate dean for student services and past WIAM President at the Miller School, took to the podium to announce the WIAM faculty awards.

WIAM Excellence in Mentorship Award

Mentorship is “so highly valued by WIAM that we recognize two women each year,” Dr. Mechaber said.

The first winner was **Stefanie Brown, M.D.**, assistant professor of medicine and pediatrics, program director of the Internal Medicine Training Program and section chief of Med/Peds Program.



From left: Hilit F. Mechaber, M.D., Stefanie Brown, M.D., and Rose van Zuilen, Ph.D.

“It was a surprise to win, especially with so many great nominees. I feel really humbled being around so many accomplished women,” Dr. Brown said.

Mentorship is “one of the things that keeps me doing what I do — being able to mentor and train people, whether they be students, residents or junior faculty. It really means a lot.”

“It’s important to pay it forward and help people avoid the career pitfalls and succeed,” Dr. Brown added.

Dr. Mechaber said of Dr. Brown: “Her experience, mentorship, creative vision and leadership skills make her the perfect candidate for the WIAM Excellence in Mentorship Award.”



Sapna Deo, M.D., receives her award along with the chair of her department, Sylvia Daunert, Pharm.D., MS, Ph.D., right.

The second winner was **Sapna Deo, Ph.D.**, professor of biochemistry and molecular biology.

“Professor Deo has an outstanding record of accomplishments as a researcher, educator and member of our ever-growing global scientific community,” Dr. Mechaber said. “She is relentlessly working to provide superb educational opportunities for high school, undergraduate, graduate and postdoctoral students, for whom she is an exemplary mentor.”

WIAM Excellence in Leadership Award

This award went to **Tanira Ferreira, M.D.**, assistant professor of medicine and chief medical officer of the University of Miami Hospital and Clinics.



From left, Hilit F. Mechaber, M.D., Rose Van Zuilen, Ph.D., Tanira Ferreira, M.D., and Department of Medicine Chair Roy E. Weiss, M.D., Ph.D.

After joining the University of Miami in 2010, Dr. Ferreira became medical director of the Critical Care Unit. Soon after, she became critical care executive director of UHealth Tower.

“There is no doubt that Dr. Ferreira has made substantial and long-lasting contributions as a physician leader to the transformation of UHealth Tower and to our health care system,” Dr. Mechaber said.

WIAM Trailblazer Award

This award went to **Elizabeth Franzmann, M.D.**, a head and neck surgeon at Sylvester Comprehensive Cancer Center and associate professor of otolaryngology. She specializes in early detection of head and neck cancer and skull base tumors. She diagnoses and treats all cancer and benign tumors of the head and neck including skin, oral cavity, pharynx and larynx, thyroid, sinuses and salivary glands.



Hilit F. Mechaber, M.D., presents Elizabeth Franzmann, M.D., with her award.

“I’m very honored to receive this award, and very thankful to my chairman [Fred F. Telischi, M.D., MEE] for nominating me,” Dr. Franzmann said.

She developed a simple, inexpensive early-detection method for oral cancer.

“This test can determine if patients are at risk long before lesions appear,” Dr. Mechaber said.

Dr. Franzmann holds 40 patents in almost 30 countries, and serves as chief scientific officer at Vigilant Biosciences, a start-up firm based on this oral rinse assay discovery.

WIAM Career Achievement Award

This award was given to **Marilyn Glassberg, M.D.**, professor of medicine and surgery and chief of the Pulmonary Division of the Interdisciplinary Stem Cell Institute. She is also professor of pediatrics in the Pulmonary Division and Director of the Rare and Interstitial Lung Disease Program and professor of medicine and surgery.



From left, Rose Van Zuilen, M.D., Marilyn Glassberg, M.D., Sabrina Taldone, M.D., MBA and Lilian Abbo, M.D.

“Throughout her career, she had dedicated herself to services at the Miller School,” Dr. Mechaber said. “For many years, Dr. Glassberg was at the forefront of advocating for gender equality, and working to create a culture supportive for women faculty.

WIAM Excellence in Service Award

Perhaps the best-kept secret of the evening was this award going to WIAM President **Rose Van Zuilen, Ph.D.**, associate professor of professional practice in the Division of Geriatrics and Palliative Medicine. She also serves as acting associate director of the Educational Development Office.

“It’s wonderful to be recognized by your peers ... including those who came before you and paved a way for all these things to be possible,” Dr. Van Zuilen said.

Dr. Van Zuilen cited Dr. Mechaber, Dr. Lilian Abbo, Nanette Vega and Janet Bringuez-Sanchez for their expertise and support of WIAM. “It’s people like this that help us be successful.”

Dr. Mechaber said, “Dr. Van Zuilen has made outstanding contributions, far beyond the confines of her job, to improve the status of women at the university. She continues to serve as a voice for WIAM’s needs, and continues to garner support for faculty development and mentorship for the largest group of women faculty at any school on campus.”

Following the faculty award presentation, the WIAM CIR Resident and Fellow Awards were presented. The winners were:

Teaching Award

Ariana Weber, M.D., Emergency Medicine, nominated by Patricia de Melo, M.D.

Research

Nandini Venkateswaran, M.D., Ophthalmology, nominated by Elena Roth, M.D. and Audina Berrocal, M.D.

Patient Care

Molly Casto, D.O., Obstetrics & Gynecology, nominated by Matthew Schlumbrecht, M.D.

Mentorship

Angela Richardson, M.D., Neurosurgery, nominated by Ricardo Komotar, M.D.

Leadership

Janice Leon, M.D., Neurology, nominated by Mohan Kottapally, M.D.

Community Outreach

Laura Horodyski, M.D., Urology, nominated by Robert Marcovich, M.D.

Advancing Women in Medicine

Stephanie Purdon, M.D., MBA, Pulmonary Medicine and Critical Care, nominated by Marilyn Glassberg, M.D.

The event also included recognition of newly promoted women faculty at both the associate and professor levels. These included:

Anesthesiology

Joni Maga, M.D., associate professor

Yiliam Rodriguez-Blanco, M.D. professor

Biochemistry and Molecular Biology

Shanta Dhar, Ph.D., associate professor

Sapna Deo, Ph.D., professor

Dermatology and Cutaneous Surgery

Dragana Ajdic, Ph.D., associate professor

Barbara Bedgoni, Ph.D., associate professor

Mariya Miteva, M.D., associate professor

Irena Pastar, Ph.D., research associate professor

Medicine

Yvonne Diaz, M.D., associate professor

Reshma Mahtani, D.O., associate professor

Lina Shehadeh, Ph.D., research associate professor

Ana Palacio, M.D., professor

Ivonne Schulman, M.D., professor

Neurology

Ami Raval, Ph.D., research associate professor

Neurologic Surgery

Roberta Brambilla, Ph.D., associate professor

Monica Perez, P.T., Ph.D., professor

Obstetrics & Gynecology

Marilyn Huang, M.D., associate professor

Karla Maguire, M.D., associate professor

Ophthalmology

Kara Cavuoto, M.D., associate professor

Anat Galor, M.D., associate professor

Darlene Miller, D.H.Sc., research professor

Kendall Donaldson, M.D., professor

Physical Therapy

Meryl Cohen, PT, D.P.T., associate professor

Radiation Oncology

Radka Stoyanova, Ph.D., research professor

Lorraine Portelance, M.D., professor

Surgery

Wrood Kassira, M.D., associate professor

Visit the web site for the [Office of Diversity and Inclusion](#) for more information on the Women in Academic Medicine group at the Miller School.