

Addressing women's health across the lifespan: Health of Women conference returns on May 2

By Peter Woody Communications Manager - Thu, Mar 20, 2025 11:30 AM - Stacy White + 1



For 25 years and in various formats and locations, the Health of Women conference has advanced the trailblazing work of the VCU Institute for Women's Health for a broad audience of health care providers. For this year's conference on May 2, the organizers are excited to bring the conference back as an in-person event after it was held virtually for the past several years.

Filled with engaging lectures and discussions, [Health of Women 2025](#) will once again follow a well-established and successful approach of addressing women's health across the lifespan to cater to the learning needs of family practice, internal medicine and OB/GYN physicians, nurse practitioners, nurses, physician assistants and other health care professionals and learners focused on women's health. Registration for Health of Women 2025 [is now open](#), and the conference is set to take place at the Hilton Richmond Hotel in Short Pump.

The organizers are ready to once again provide attendees with great learning to enhance their care of women patients and highlight the prominent role that VCU and VCU Health have in the field of women's health. Experts will address a broad range of topics for attendees, including the following:

- Heart health
- Breast health

- Diabetes
- Bone health
- Hormone therapy
- Cervical cancer
- Pregnancy

Following longstanding tradition, national leaders will be recognized with the Pinn Research Award, the Healy Award for Visionary Leadership in Women's Health and the Institute for Women's Health Advocacy and Public Policy Award.

"The conference has focused a very wonderful bright light on VCU as a leader in women's health for many years," said Wendy S. Klein, MD, MACP, a co-chair of the conference. "People usually come back year after year."

A National Leader in Women's Health

Klein, her fellow co-chair Lisa Ellis, MD, MACP, and Susan Kornstein, MD, executive director of the [VCU Institute of Women's Health](#), which organizes the conference, all say that their commitment to an interdisciplinary approach to women's health across the lifespan is what underpins their work overall, as well as the goals of the conference.

"Good health care is interdisciplinary, especially women's health," Klein said. "We teach medicine from a team standpoint. We round as a team. We need to be educating people in the same manner and supporting that team approach."

"We've been a national leader in women's health for many decades," added Kornstein. "And an interdisciplinary approach to women's health is best for both clinical care and for research."

Addressing Gaps in Knowledge and Research

Though Klein and Kornstein have been working together on the conference for 25 years, their professional relationship at VCU goes back further to when they first met in 1989. One of their earliest collaborations was opening a small multidisciplinary health clinic that focused on internal medicine and psychiatry. Through their work, they hoped to address what they saw as a knowledge gap in terms of research on women's health issues as well as best practices for treatment of these issues.

"We all went to medical school at a time when there were very few women in medicine. Only about 10 percent of my medical class were women. There was no field of women's health at that time other than obstetrics and gynecology," Kornstein said. "We now understand that women's health encompasses all medical specialties, as we have learned that some conditions are unique to women, some are more common in women and some may be expressed differently in women and men, where women may have different symptoms or respond differently to treatments. As the number of women in medicine grew, they noted the gaps in our knowledge and became very interested in answering the question of, are we taking the best care of our women patients?"

In 1993, Kornstein, Klein, and several others co-founded the Women's Health Center at Stony Point, which was one of the first multidisciplinary women's health centers in an academic medical center. The concept of a clinical care center gradually broadened into the VCU Institute for Women's Health, which was chartered in 1999 and focused on clinical care, research, education, community outreach and leadership development.

This also included a women's health residency within VCU's internal medicine program, and they met Ellis when she was part of the residency after going through the VCU School of Medicine. Ellis later became the director of the Women's Health Center at Stony Point, leading the development of [programs and services](#) that focused on the pillars of women's health. These are led by highly specialized experts with national and international reputations for excellence and a sole focus on women and their unique health concerns.

The Institute for Women's Health received a designation as a National Center of Excellence in Women's Health from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, and today it has more than 170 affiliate faculty representing 15 schools and 46 departments across VCU. For Ellis, the research results are what help push their work forward. "There's nothing that speaks better than data," she said. "And that's why this is such important work."

A Platform for Education and Training

Kornstein also notes that the Institute's education and research efforts are enhanced because of its reach across VCU and VCU Health, which brings many benefits. "The whole idea of the Institute is to get people out of the silos of their departments and schools and have them work together to improve women's health."

Klein mentions heart disease as one example where research has led to innovations in care for women, as well as men. "Women have more microvascular disease, while men have more macrovascular disease, or large vessel disease. Diagnosing that is different in men compared to women and we have learned a great deal about this in the last few decades, which has improved our care of both men and women," Klein explained.

Creating the Health of Women conference provided a much larger platform to share this knowledge. "We have nationally recognized cardiologists come and speak to our audience and attendees will come up afterwards and say, why have I never heard this before?" Klein said. "That is what drives us to do this. That's just one example. There are many."

With the education and training aspects in mind, Health of Women 2025 organizers have also partnered with VCU Health Continuing Education to ensure that continuing education AMA, ANCC, and ACPE credits are available for physicians, nurses, and pharmacists attending the conference. That aspect, combined with an agenda that features nationally-known speakers as well as experts from VCU Health, presents a great learning opportunity for all conference attendees.

Klein says the scope of the conference is an extension of the organizers' belief that a collaborative, team-based approach to health care often produces the best results, whether that is for education, research or patient care.

"We do know that when you bring it together and take an integrated holistic approach, you get better outcomes."

[Health of Women 2025](#) registration is now open, with a registration deadline of April 18. More information is available at the [event website](#), or through the [VCU Institute of Women's Health](#).

