

INSTITUTE FOR WOMEN'S HEALTH NEWSLETTER

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insights into women's health,
research, and advocacy



March 2026 Newsletter

Application deadline is tomorrow for the [Women's Health and Healing Service Trip to Guatemala!](#) This study abroad opportunity will offer a week (May 23-May 30, 2026) in partnership with indigenous women, midwives, nurses, and community leaders, learning about traditional Maya medicine and exploring the history of women's health care and healing in Guatemala. Space is limited- get your application in today! **The application deadline is March 6, 2026.**

Abstract submissions are open! The 20th Annual VCU Women's Health Research Day will be held on **April 28th, 2026 from 1:00-4:30 PM** at the Larrick Student Center. The program, presented by the VCU Institute for Women's Health, includes a plenary symposium entitled "Midlife Matters: Integrating Menopause Research, Innovation, and Impact", a poster session showcasing women's health research by VCU faculty and students, poster awards, and a reception. Visit [our website](#) for more information. Click [here](#) to register. To [Submit an Abstract](#), click [here](#). **Abstract submissions are due by Friday, April 10th.** For questions regarding abstract submissions, please contact Kellyn Moody (Kellyn.Moody@vcuhealth.org).

Registration is open! The Health of Women 2026 Conference, presented by the VCU Institute for Women's Health, will be held on **Friday, May 29, 2026**, at the Hilton Richmond Hotel & Spa – Short Pump. This is a national continuing education conference for clinicians (but anyone is welcome) covering many aspects of women's health, including reproductive health, cardiovascular health, bone health, mental health, breast health, and more. **Registration is open!**

IWH Training Survey

- Please complete this [survey](#) to help us gather data on training and mentoring activities of IWH Affiliate Faculty. Contact Dr. Heather Jones (hjones7@vcu.edu) with any questions.

Upcoming IWH Research Development Group Meetings

- Cancer in Women Research Development Group: Tuesday, March 10 at 11:00am.

To be added to the list for any of the [Research Development Groups](#) or to suggest a new group, please contact molly.hyer@vcuhealth.org.

Featured Research Development Group (RDG) of the Month



The highlighted group of the month is our [Female Athlete Research Development Group](#)! This group is co-chaired by Dr. Alex Lempke and Dr. Jessie Oldham, both Assistant Professors in the Department of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation. The group is a collaborative initiative focused on the overall health, well being, and performance of females engaging in physical activity. The Female Athlete RDG encompasses individuals across ages (adolescence to adulthood), engagement levels (recreational exercise to competitive organized sport), and abilities (physically capable through injury and adaptive sport). The overall goal of this group is to connect researchers across disciplines to facilitate cross-collaboration for well-rounded, impactful projects centered on advancing the understanding and research of female athletes across all levels. Current projects among the group include the impact of low energy availability on musculoskeletal health in adolescent and young adult females, and sex differences in post-concussion deficits and subsequent musculoskeletal injury risk in adolescent athletes. If you are interested in learning more about the Female

Athlete RDG or joining the group mailing list, please contact Kellyn Moody (Kellyn.Moody@vcuhealth.org).

News from IWH leadership and affiliate faculty

- **Wally Smith, MD**, Professor in the Department of Internal Medicine, and Director of the VCU Adult Sickle Cell Program, was awarded the [Community Enhancement Award](#) by the L. Douglas Wilder School of Government and Public Affairs and will be recognized at the 18th Excellence in Virginia Government Awards.
- **Alex Lempke, PhD, ATC**, Assistant Professor in the Department of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation and current BIRCWH Scholar, was featured on an episode of the [Physio Insights podcast](#) presented by Run Easy titled, “Indoor vs Outdoor Running Mechanics: Insights from Wearable Sensors.”
- **Ana Diallo, PhD, MPH, RN**, Assistant Professor in the Department of Adult Health and Nursing Systems, and former BIRCWH Scholar, was awarded the [2026 Health Equity Award Rising Star](#) by the American Nurses Foundation.
- **Melanie Bean, PhD**, Associate Professor in the Department of Pediatrics, was recognized with the Outstanding Contribution to Cancer Prevention and Control award at the Massey Cancer Center’s 2026 Cancer Prevention and Control Program Retreat.

Upcoming Events

Our Director of Research, **Amy Salisbury, PhD, LNP, PMH-CNS, BC, FAAN** will be a keynote speaker at the Beyond Beginnings Health Symposium on **Friday, March 6th**. This symposium will feature experts in the field of family health. Click the [link](#) for the full symposium agenda and registration information.

The Emory BIRCIWH & SCORE are hosting the Women's Health Research & Leadership Lecture Series on **Wednesday, March 11, 2026 from 12:00-1:00pm EST**. This session will feature a talk titled, "Collaboration Builds Innovation- Digital Twins and Biomedical Device Design for Preterm Birth Prevention." Click [here](#) to register for the lecture.

The NIH Office of Research on Women's Health and the Uniformed Services University Military Women's Health Research Program are hosting the Military Women's Health Webinar Series on **Thursday, March 12, 2026 from 3:00-4:00pm EST**. The session will feature talks on innovation, including "The Lifecycle of Agency: How "Decide and Be Ready" Research Informs Patient-Centered Women's Healthcare," and "Move Over, Mice: Humanizing Endometriosis Research with Novel Alternative Methods (NAMs)." Click [here](#) to register for the webinar. The [Inaugural National Conference on Women's Health \(NCWH 2026\)](#) is being held March 11-13, 2026 in Washington D.C. Click [here](#) for more information on registration and the agenda.

The Department of Gender, Sexuality, and Women's Studies at VCU, in partnership with The Sexual Health Exploration Project, will be hosting a virtual symposium April 17-19th. Registration is free and open to everyone. For more information, please visit the [symposium website](#), and contact Ethan Coston, PhD (bmcoston@vcu.edu) with any questions.

Research Study Recruitment Corner

Are you looking to recruit participants for active studies? Please fill out the [Research Study Recruitment Corner Form](#) if you are interested in having your study included in the newsletter.

- **Deciphering the Cognitive and Neural Underpinnings of Risk-Taking in Eating Disorders (RISK-EAT)**
 - Recruiting adolescents (ages 12-17) and young adult (ages 18-25) females with and without bulimia nervosa
 - Two study visits are required:
 - Visit 1: (in person or virtual) will be a ~3 hour screening visit
 - Visit 2: (in person at VCU CARI center) will be a ~3-4 hour visit
 - Two-week follow-up of online surveys and games
 - Participants will be compensated \$75 per visit and additionally compensated for engagement in the follow-up period
 - Please contact Kelsey Hagan, PhD, LP (Kelsey.Hagan@vcuhealth.org) for more information.

- **Reflex Evaluation After Concussive Trauma (REACT)**
 - Recruiting adolescents (ages 13-19) for 2 groups:
 - 1) diagnosed with a concussion within the last 14 days
 - 2) no history of diagnosed concussion

- The number of study visits (~90-120 minutes each) varies by group:
 - 1 study visit for healthy controls
 - 3 study visits across 12 months for the concussion group
- Participants will be compensated for their participation
- Please contact Jessie Oldham, PhD (Jessie.Oldham@vcuhealth.org) or Jackson Marra-Dotts (Jackson.MarraDotts@vcuhealth.org) for more information.

Follow our new social media pages!

The VCU Institute for Women's Health has a new social media presence on [LinkedIn](#), Instagram, and [Facebook](#). Connect with us to stay up to date on the latest IWH news!

Do you have exciting news to share? We want to hear from you! Please share any recent career developments (grants, publications, promotions, media stories) using the [Newsletter Submission Form](#). We will feature these highlights in the next IWH newsletter.

Help us celebrate excellence by nominating standout faculty or yourself to be the next **IWH Affiliate Faculty of the Month**. Use the [Newsletter Submission Form](#), and be sure to include 1-2 sentences highlighting their impact, achievements, or what makes their work stand out.