



November 20, 2023

Monica Bertagnolli, MD  
Director  
National Institutes of Health  
1 Center Drive MSC 0122  
Bethesda, MD 20892

Dear Dr. Bertagnolli:

On behalf of the Society for Women's Health Research (SWHR), I would like to congratulate you on your confirmation as director of the National Institutes of Health (NIH). SWHR is thrilled to see another woman—one with such a distinguished record and commitment to excellence—at the helm of our nation's preeminent biomedical research institution.

SWHR is a more than 30-year-old national nonprofit organization that is dedicated to promoting sex differences in disease and improving women's health through science, policy, and education. Since its founding, SWHR has worked to improve the representation of women—and subpopulations of women—in clinical research and to address unmet needs and gaps in women's health. This includes ensuring that sex and gender influences in health and disease are considered in research, promoting policies that support women in the biomedical research workforce, and identifying and addressing gaps across research, clinical care, and policy.

Our programs span areas that exclusively, disproportionately, or differently affect women. This work includes, but is by no means limited to, the following:

- **Alzheimer's Disease.** SWHR has a long history of work in Alzheimer's disease, which disproportionately affects women, both as patients and caregivers. SWHR's science and policy programming in Alzheimer's disease has resulted in:
  - [Breaking Down the Burden of Alzheimer's Disease for Women](#) Fact Sheet (2022)
  - ["Power of Research: Bridging the Gap"](#) Luncheon, co-hosted with the Women's Alzheimer's Movement (2023)
  - [SWHR Policy Agenda: Breaking Down the Burden of Alzheimer's Disease for Women](#) (2022)
  - [Taking Heed of Alzheimer's Disease: Recognizing and Responding to a Coming Crisis](#) Congressional Briefing (2022)
  - [Understanding the Impact of Sex and Gender in Alzheimer's Disease: A Call to Action](#) Publication (2018)
  - [Value of Diagnostics within Women's Health: Alzheimer's Disease](#) Fact Sheet

- **Autoimmune and Immune-Mediated Diseases and Conditions.** SWHR’s work in autoimmune and immune-mediated diseases has included work in skin diseases ([alopecia areata](#), [atopic dermatitis](#), and [psoriatic arthritis](#)); [lupus](#); and a comprehensive policy program that featured a [policy agenda](#), a [four-part congressional briefing series](#), and a [series of policy briefs](#).
- **Bone Health.** SWHR’s bone health work has involved convening experts across disciplines and sectors to discuss science and policy needs and opportunities in women’s bone health across the lifespan; releasing a bone health [policy agenda](#); producing [fact sheets](#); and publishing the article “[Recommendations for Improving Women’s Bone Health Throughout the Lifespan](#)” in the *Journal of Women’s Health*.
- **Cancers.** SWHR has done work related to cancers that solely or disproportionately affect women. The Society has hosted two public forums on gynecologic cancers — “[How Vaccines and Screening Can Prevent Cervical Cancer](#)” and “[Ovarian Cancer Screening: More than a Pelvic Exam](#)”—to share the role of screenings and diagnostics in detecting and monitoring disease and guiding treatment; penned the editorial “[The Value of Prevention in Combatting Cervical Cancer](#)” for Mediaplanet’s 2022 Women’s Reproductive Health campaign; hosted a breast cancer diagnostics webinar titled, “[Understanding the Tests that Could Save My Breasts](#),” and has [engaged on policy](#) initiatives, such as the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force Draft Research Plan on Cervical Cancer Screening.
- **[Coalition to Advance Maternal Therapeutics \(CAMT\)](#).** The CAMT, founded in 2014, actively works to increase the inclusion of pregnant and lactating populations in research. The coalition successfully advocated for the creation of the Task Force on Research Specific to Pregnant Women and Lactating Women (PRGLAC) and remains committed to raising awareness among policymakers and the public about the need to include these populations in research to close gaps in knowledge and improve the health of women and their families.
- **[Women’s Health Equity Initiative](#).** This initiative highlights data on women’s health in the United States and aims to provide solutions to improve health equity across diseases, conditions, and life stages. The initiative currently focuses on six diseases—Alzheimer’s disease, bone health, maternal health, menopause, lupus, and uterine health—and aims to add additional issue areas in the future.

SWHR also has programs in heart disease, menopause, obesity, and uterine health, among others. Beyond our programs, SWHR serves as the institutional home of the Friends of the Office of Research on Women’s Health (ORWH) and participated in the listening sessions regarding the establishment of the Advanced Research Projects Agency for Health (ARPA-H).

While we have seen the field of women’s health research change markedly over the past 30 years, since the enactment of the NIH Revitalization Act of 1993, which mandated the inclusion

of women and minorities in NIH-funded research, women's health research remains at a disadvantage. Women were historically excluded from clinical trials, researchers continue to give preference to male animal models, and conditions that disproportionately affect women receive less funding in proportion to the disease burden than those that affect males.

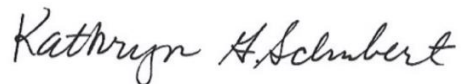
Fortunately, through the recently announced White House Initiative on Women's Health Research, we are hopeful that we can catalyze a much-needed prioritization of women's health research, close research and knowledge gaps, and spur innovation that will drastically improve women's health outcomes across the lifespan. SWHR's statement in response to the White House announcement can be found [here](#).

The NIH will be a key partner in moving our nation beyond the status quo. SWHR would appreciate the opportunity to meet with you to discuss the myriad opportunities that exist to advance women's health research and, as a result, improve women's health outcomes.

SWHR looks forward to working with you in your new role and stands ready to assist you and your team as you build upon the NIH's mission to enhance health, lengthen life, and reduce illness and disability. We are eager to see what the NIH will accomplish under your leadership.

If you have questions or need additional information, please don't hesitate to contact me. We eagerly await your reply.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Kathryn G. Schubert".

Kathryn G. Schubert, MPP, CAE  
President and CEO  
Society for Women's Health Research