



Letter from Guest Editors

Introduction and purpose: The House of Medicine & Dermatology



Two major goals spurred the evolution of this special issue of the *International Journal of Women's Dermatology*. The first was to highlight the interplay between dermatology and other members of the house of medicine in the shared pursuit of advancing knowledge for some of the skin's most vexing disorders. Skin disorders are not trivial and can be painful, debilitating, and/or disfiguring, and even lethal. Moreover, the skin is fully integrated into human biology, and what happens in the skin does not always respect its borders but can be transmitted to other organ systems and vice versa. With interdisciplinary collaboration between dermatologists and other medical specialists, we can advance our understanding of such multisystem diseases and improve patient care.

The second goal of this special issue was to expand a critically important knowledge base in dermatology on the health of women and on sex and gender differences that would inform the treatment of disorders seen in clinical practice. After World War II, biomedical research grew by leaps and bounds, yet women were largely excluded as participants in clinical trials. Even on occasions when women were included, the traditional approach to analyzing outcomes was to pool the data on women and men, thus eliminating the option of ascertaining if and how interventions were affecting women and men differently.

Change in research practice came in the mid- to late-1990s, when the National Institutes of Health (NIH), the largest single funder of medical and behavioral research, began requiring the

inclusion of women in their funded studies. However, it was not until January of 2016 that NIH funding required the inclusion of female vertebrates in laboratory research—a critically important change because such investigation provides the biological foundation for much of subsequent human research. With the inclusion of both sexes as study participants and the investigation of sex and gender differences, the opportunity to identify and understand disease risk, severity, and therapeutic response more fully and clearly becomes enhanced for all patients.

As guest editors, it is our pleasure to thank the journal's co-editors in chief, Drs. Jenny Murase and Dedee Murrell, and the task force of outstanding clinicians and researchers for their leadership and guidance in making this special issue possible. In this issue, articles from experts in diverse fields of medicine are paired with leaders in corresponding areas of dermatology to focus on what is known and yet to be known about disorders that benefit from interdisciplinary collaboration, with specific attention to what is known about the health of women regarding these disorders and the influence of sex or gender on health outcomes.

Contemporary data increasingly show the value of interdisciplinary research and the clinical benefit of interdisciplinary collaboration. By capitalizing on the unique opportunities to work together across specialties in investigating the interfaces of our disciplines and treating disorders, we can anticipate discovering answers to important questions on health and improved modes of care for our patients.



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