

# Obstetrics & Gynecology NEWSLETTER

## RESEARCH FEATURE:

**Jennifer McIntosh, DO, Awarded the Gates Foundation through Grand Challenges on “Mitochondrial Antioxidant to Improve Vascular Function in Preeclampsia”**

With being one of about ten applicants who were awarded out of 1,000 applicants, we were awarded the Gates Foundation Grand Challenges Grant and were given additional funding.

Chosen by the foundation, they deemed this proposal as a strong strategic fit for the MNCNH portfolio as it introduces a safe, low-cost, and globally scalable therapeutic approach that targets mitochondrial oxidative stress—an underexplored mechanism in preeclampsia pathophysiology. By using MitoQ to improve endothelial and placental vascular function, the project directly supports our goals to fund interventions that prevent progression of maternal disorders and improve pregnancy outcomes in LMICs. The pilot study design is practical and scientifically robust, with clear potential for expansion to multinational trials. As such, this work represents a key opportunity to advance the product pipeline for maternal therapeutics while building the evidence base needed for long-term integration into care.



## Welcome to the Winter 2025 OBGYN NEWSLETTER

The Winter 2025 newsletter showcases significant progress in clinical care, education and research within the department. Highlights include new grants supporting innovative work in maternal health, cancer therapy, and trauma-informed care, as well as a clinical trial focused on preventing hypertensive disorders of pregnancy. Updates feature expanded mental health services, a new perimenopause support group, and leadership initiatives to strengthen educational programs. The department welcomed new staff, celebrated awards and presentations, and shared recent publications advancing knowledge in obstetrics and gynecology. Upcoming events and alumni news underscore continued commitment to excellence, collaboration, and improving patient outcomes.

Janet S. Rader, MD  
Jack A. and Elaine D. Klieger Professor and Chair  
Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology  
Associate Director, CRTEC



## NEW GRANTS:

- **Jennifer McIntosh, DO (PI): Gates Foundation Grand Challenges Grant - Mitochondrial Antioxidant to Improve Vascular Function in Preeclampsia**
- **Weichao Chen, PhD (Co-PI): MCW Flourishing—A Master's Degree Program to Promote Flourishing Health Professional Leaders who Embrace Education and Character**
- **Natalie Mironov, DO (PI): Advancing a Healthier Wisconsin (AHW) — HCET Trauma-Informed Care Training Project**
- **Pradeep Chaluvally-Raghavan, PhD (Co-PI): Advancing a Healthier Wisconsin (AHW) — FXR1 Therapy Development for Cancer Treatment**
- **Pradeep Chaluvally-Raghavan, PhD (PI): Gastric Cancer Foundation — Development of Novel Treatments for Stomach Adenocarcinoma**
- **Anna Palatnik, MD (PI): National Institute of Health (NIH) -1R01AT013695-01— Mindfulness and Wearable Biosensors to Prevent Hypertensive Disorders of Pregnancy (MINDBP)**

## NEW CLINICAL TRIAL HIGHLIGHT:

• **PI: Anna Palatnik, MD — Mindfulness and Wearable Biosensors to Prevent Hypertensive Disorders of Pregnancy (MINDBP):** a clinical trial grant funded by the National Center for Complementary & Integrative Health. Mindfulness-based interventions hold significant promise as a non-pharmacological intervention to prevent preeclampsia. Mindfulness-based interventions significantly reduce blood pressure in adults with hypertension and prehypertension. In the MINDBP study we seek to determine if prenatal mindfulness training intervention can be feasible, acceptable, and delivered with fidelity across multiple sites, MCW and Brown University. In addition, we will explore whether our intervention can have even higher adherence with minor enhancement using wearable biosensors as they hold great potential to augment the beneficial effects of mindfulness by enabling continuous, real-time, and non-invasive monitoring of physiological responses. The MINDBP study will generate necessary data to inform a future large-scale trial examining effectiveness of MT in HDP prevention.

**Looking for a last minute holiday gift this season?  
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[mbilicki@mcw.edu](mailto:mbilicki@mcw.edu)**

## GRANT HIGHLIGHT:

**Gastric Cancer Foundation Awards Pradeep Chaluvally-Raghavan, PhD \$100,000 Seed Grant to Fuel Novel Drug and Genomic Studies—** Therapies known as antibody-drug conjugates (ADCs) can be quite effective in combating tumors because they combine cancer-killing medicines with molecules designed to block mechanisms in cancer cells that allow them to grow and thrive. Chaluvally-Raghavan is developing an ADC that targets stomach tumors in a completely new way.

Chaluvally-Raghavan's research is focused on oncostatin M receptor (OSMR), a protein that's known to activate signals in cancer cells that help them to grow, proliferate quickly and spread beyond the primary tumor. His Gastric Cancer Foundation-funded project centers around developing an effective ADC to inhibit OSMR.

He and his colleagues have published research demonstrating the potential of inhibiting OSMR to treat ovarian cancer. In gastric cancer, high levels of OSMR observed in higher-grade and later-stage patients portend particularly bad outcomes. That gave Chaluvally-Raghavan's team a strong motivation to extend OSMR therapy beyond gynecologic oncology, he said. "We know this protein activates cancerous mechanisms in multiple solid tumor types, but based on the data we've seen, we believe our drug could have a particularly strong impact in gastric cancer," Chaluvally-Raghavan said.

With the funding from Gastric Cancer Foundation, Chaluvally-Raghavan's lab will pursue two main goals. The first is to develop an ADC that combines a novel anti-OSMR antibody with a cancer-killing drug called monomethyl auristatin E (MMAE), which is a commonly used element of FDA-approved ADCs to treat many cancers. The second is to test the effectiveness of the experimental drug in tumor cells, three-dimensional models and animal models of gastric cancer.

## CLINICAL UPDATES:

**Women's Mental Health** — Kristin Dowe, PhD is now providing psychological services, including therapy and third-party reproduction psychological evaluations, at the Reproductive Medicine Center two days a week.

### Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) in Perimenopause group starting in early 2026 —

This is a six-week cognitive and behavioral therapy-based group for patients in the perimenopause phase. This natural part of life can bring about a variety of cognitive, emotional, physical and social changes for women. It is not uncommon to experience sleep disruptions, mood fluctuations, brain fog, sexual changes, relationship shifts or other physical symptoms, such as hot flashes or joint pain. The variety of changes can affect coping and overall quality of life. This group aims to bring education and strategies to positively navigate this transition. This group is designed for women who are experiencing current symptoms of perimenopause and may have this diagnosis from their care team. Some sessions may include experts from other medical specialties such as OB/GYN or psychiatry. Each session lasts six weeks and includes at-home skill practices. Patients are expected to complete an initial individual intake prior to participation. Next group offered in early 2026. For additional information or to schedule an intake appointment, please call 414-805-4781.

### New location for our OBGYN services - Greenfield 27th Street Clinic —

Rebecca Mahn, MD, our newest generalist is now seeing patients at Froedtert Greenfield 27th Street Clinic. She is fluent in Spanish and specializes in pregnancy care, family planning, abnormal bleeding, pelvic pain, fibroids, and social & population health.



We are pleased to announce the appointment of **Dr. Jessica Francis, MD**, as Vice Chair of Education in the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology. In this role,

Dr. Francis will provide strategic leadership and oversight for all educational programs within the department and advance scholarship in medical education.

Dr. Francis has been a key leader in graduate medical education since 2014, serving first as Associate Program Director and, since 2020, as Program Director. She has played a pivotal role in guiding residency training through the COVID era and in establishing a single-institution program in collaboration with Froedtert and MCW.

A graduate of Michigan State University College of Human Medicine, Dr. Francis completed her OBGYN residency at the Medical College of Wisconsin and a fellowship in Pediatric and Adolescent Gynecology at Baylor University. She maintains a thriving clinical practice in the Adolescent Medicine Clinic at Children's Wisconsin and is one of only two fellowship-trained Pediatric and Adolescent Gynecologists in the state. Additionally, she provides care for the LGBTQ+ community through Froedtert's Inclusion Health Clinic and has mentored numerous learners pursuing careers in these specialized areas.



WELCOME NEW STAFF:

**Sunday Negedu, PhD** —  
Postdoctoral Researcher in Dr.  
Ojesina's lab.



**Tahlia Erickson** — Research  
Coordinator with Dr. Palatnik.



**Grisel Benitez, RN** — Research  
Nurse with Dr. Palatnik.



**Perrin Schupbach, PhD** —  
Postdoctoral Researcher in Dr.  
Ojesina's lab.



**Kaitlin Johnson, PhD** —  
Research Scientist in Dr.  
McIntosh's lab.



**Sue Nelson** — Administrative  
Assistant

Staff Story:

20 years later, Grisel Bentiz finds a Froedtert Today cover framed in an unexpected office. This Froedtert Today image wasn't just an ordinary cover, it was her own drawing that was chosen for the cover of this magazine years ago. Grisel had lost the original copy along the way and has been looking for one ever since. So it was all serendipitous that she was in the medical staff office and saw this propped up on a desk. The staff members didn't know where it originally came from so they gave the framed copy to her.

Grisel Benitez, RN, started with us in October as a research nurse with Dr. Palatnik's research team.

"I am so grateful for the staff giving me this copy," Grisel stated.

Fun News:

Erin Briesath's son entered into his local Gingerbread contest and took first place!



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follow us!  
Have something to  
share?**

**Send it our way!**

**[mcwobgyn@mcw.edu](mailto:mcwobgyn@mcw.edu)**

## ✓ MARK YOUR CALENDARS:

February 20, 2026: Department Winter Party

Milwaukee Public Market

April 8, 2026: James Aiman, MD Endowed Lectureship

**Karen J. Gibbins, MD, MSCI —**

Associate Professor, Maternal-Fetal Medicine  
Oregon Health & Science University

Center for Cancer Discovery Building

April 17, 2026: Women's Health Conference

Brookfield Conference Center

June 17, 2026: Resident and Fellow Research and Alumni Day

MCW

June 26, 2026: Resident and Fellow Graduation

The Wisconsin Country Club



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<https://obgyn.mcw.edu/about-us/philanthropy/>

## DEPARTMENT NEWS

- **Timothy Klatt, MD**, was invited to speak at ObGyn Grand Rounds at Indiana University on "Best Practices for M&M Conferences."
- **Weichao (Vera) Chen, PhD**, presented her research on 'Promote Student Flourishing with TEC-VARIETY in Tech-Enhanced Learning' at the MCW 2025 Innovations in Healthcare Education Research (IHER) Conference.
- **Jamie Neary, NP**, was invited to talk at the APP grand rounds fertility preservation and preconception talk.
- **Jessica Grusnick, PA-C**, awarded the Carlie Beaudin, APNP, Excellence in Professionalism Award.



- **Dr. Abbey Kruper** was invited to present at the Denver Medical Society as well as Corewell Health in Detroit on the topic of professional fulfillment as a physician.
- **Abbey Kruper, PsyD**, Accepted position as Co-Chair of the American Psychological Association Presidential Task Force on Midlife and Menopause, and Clinical Work Group Chair for development of a Health Advisory.
- **Subarna Paul** has completed her PhD in Biomedical and Health Informatics from UW-Milwaukee.

**DEPARTMENT NEWS CONT'D:**

- Current MCW student, Maya Seshan, presented her poster on Uterine Fibroid Education Module for Medical Students at the AAGL Global Congress in Vancouver—**Mitch Depke, MD ('26) and Ben Beran, MD** were co-authors.
- **Rosinda De La Pena, MD, has been** appointed to 3-year term for Diversity and Inclusion in the Workforce Committee at SMFM.
- **Brock Polnaszek, MD**, was a Finalist Foundation for SMFM (FSFM) and the American Association of Obstetricians and Gynecologists Foundation (AAOGF) Scholarship.
- **Dr. Brock Polnaszek** was featured on MCW's Word on Medicine Podcast discussing Tylenol and Pregnancy.
- **Jamie Harriman, CGC**, had a baby in August—Scottie Pam Harriman. Mom and baby are doing great.
- Research Nurse, **Joharah Bayazid**, had her baby in November—Aafiya Noor Khan. Mom and baby are doing well.
- **Rosinda De La Pena, MD**, was awarded the 2025 Dr. Joseph E. Kerschner Professionalism Enrichment Award for your outstanding contributions to enhancing the environment of professionalism at the Medical College of Wisconsin.

**IN THE NEWS:**

- **Dr. Jennifer McIntosh** was interviewed on WTMJ4 news on Pre-Eclampsia and discussed her Gates Foundation through Grand Challenges award on “Mitochondrial Antioxidant to Improve Vascular Function in Preeclampsia”.

**ALUMNI CORNER:**

We'd like to hear from you! Please send us your updates to:  
[obgynresidency@mcw.edu](mailto:obgynresidency@mcw.edu)

**Resident Alumni Update:**

Resident alum, **Zachary Schoppen**, authored and published a book titled: *The Midwizard of Cosconia*. It is now available on Amazon and Goodreads.



**PUBLICATIONS:**

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GENETIC COUNSELING NEWS:

- Cory Smid, MGCS, CGC, is a genetic counselor who joined our team in the summer of 2025 and specializes in neurogenetics. Prior to joining our team, Cory worked as a genetic counselor at UW-Health in Madison, WI working in multiple clinics including medical genetics (pediatric and adult), and a multi-disciplinary neurocutaneous clinic. While in at UW-Health, he was heavily involved in training genetic counseling students, also serving as an adjunct assistant professor. Cory has also worked as a genetic counselor at Children's Wisconsin, working in several clinics including pediatrics, neuromuscular, and neurogenetics. Cory received his Bachelor of Science (genetics) in 2016 and Master of Genetic Counselor Studies in 2019, both from the University of Wisconsin-Madison.
 
- Cory Smid, CGC, presented at Neuro Resident Education Day in September on *Genetics in Neurology: a Beneficent Relationship*. He also presented at Neuro Grand Rounds—*Trick or Trait: Genetic Counseling in Neurology* at MCW in October.
- Emma Kell, CGC, presented her poster at NSGC: *Assessing the Impact of Updated NCCN Guidelines on CHEK2 p.I157T Breast Cancer Management*.
- The School of Graduate Studies is committed to the Medical College of Wisconsin's educational mission. The success of our graduate students is due to the dedication of our graduate faculty. Genetic Counselors: **Allison Genchanok**, **Samantha Sandlow**, **Samantha Stachowiak** were awarded the Graduate School Outstanding Educator Awards for the 2024 - 2025 academic year. Program Director Jenny Geurts Personally handed out the awards to the recipients during a GC Appreciation Day event.
- The team shared GC Appreciation Day 11/13: it was a successful day spreading awareness both on and off campus. MFM/Fetal Concerns Clinic honored their GCs with a potluck.

For More Details: [obgyn.mcw.edu](http://obgyn.mcw.edu)