

VCU Health surgeon inspired by study that touts female surgeons' positive outcomes

At a petite 5 feet 2 inches, Paula Ferrada, M.D., might not appear physically formidable. The medical director of the Surgical and Trauma Intensive Care Unit at Virginia Commonwealth University Medical Center fondly remembers a comment by a patient's father that reminded her of her slight stature.

"I was afraid when I saw you at the beginning, so tiny and a girl. But boy, you proved me wrong," the patient's father said. "Thank you for saving my son's life."

A new [study](#) published in BMJ, an international peer-reviewed medical journal, indicates that patients treated by female surgeons have a "small but statistically significant decrease in 30-day mortality and similar surgical outcomes (length of stay, complications, and readmission), compared with those treated by male surgeons." The study was led by a male doctor, Raj Satkunasingam, M.D., an assistant professor of urology at Houston Methodist Hospital, and also suggests further research is needed to determine what drives the difference in mortality rates, so that all surgeons can take heed and be successful.

Ferrada has been vocal nationally about eliminating stereotypes, particularly those related to male-dominated professions like hers — surgery. She joined the faculty at VCU in 2010 and is also an associate professor of surgery and director of VCU's Surgical Critical Care Fellowship Program. Nationally, she is a leader of the [#looklikeasurgeon](#) social media campaign that began in 2015, and continues to sprout up via Facebook and other mediums, with female physicians' testimonies of their triumphs while studying and practicing medicine.

VCU News spoke with Ferrada about her thoughts on the study results, and her hopes for the future of the surgery profession for female doctors.

In VCU News: https://news.vcu.edu/faculty-and-staff/VCU_Health_surgeon_inspired_by_study_that_touts_female_surgeons

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Leha Byrd
University Public Affairs

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Paula Ferrada, MD

Associate Professor of Surgery
[Director, Surgical Critical Care Fellowship Program](#), VCU School of Medicine
Medical Director, Surgical & Trauma
Intensive Care Unit (STICU), VCU
Health System



What is your immediate, initial reaction to the study as it relates to female surgeons' success in their profession?

I'm immensely excited that science is showing the successes of female surgeons. Part of the reason why I'm so vocal about the issue is because I believe it is the job of all of us to support minorities and avoid discrimination. There have been changes in the past few years, and I believe these will continue. VCU and VCU Health do an excellent job offering honest conversations about diversity, which I see throughout our departments. Michel Aboutanos, M.D., [VCU Trauma Center medical director] is a great advocate for women in surgery — not only for me but other women in our division. Incidentally, his wife is also a surgeon. My husband, Rahul Anand [VCU associate professor of surgery] is a trauma surgeon too. He is my partner and also my rock.

In your work, what have you experienced as a constant battle for female surgeons?

It is a fine balance to be taken seriously and at the same time not be too aggressive.

What are your hopes for the surgery profession for women and overall?

In my dream world, surgeons would be judged by their outcomes, capacity and skills, rather than misjudged by any other bias.

What has been the response to you as a surgeon, from your male patients and their families?

I have been extremely lucky with my patients. Even when some discriminatory comment might have been said in the past, somehow I always end up having great relationships with my patients and their families. I have very grateful patients and families that have become almost part of my extended family. Once you go through a difficult, stressful situation such as life-threatening disease, the emotional ties are binding, in a good way.

As a child, was surgery what you always wanted to do professionally?

No. But, I always knew I wanted to help people somehow. Human connections are the most rewarding part of my job, and I treasure these immensely.

What is your advice to current and aspiring female surgeons?

- Never give up. Don't let anyone tell you who you should be.
- Follow your heart, work hard, believe that you can do it and you will do it.
- Reach out if you need help. There are a bunch of us out there willing to help, support, advise and encourage you along the way.
- **You are not alone. We are all in this together.**

Faculty Highlights

E. Ayn Welleford, Ph.D., Associate Professor and Chair, Department of Gerontology



On Oct. 23, the Virginia Center for Inclusive Communities named Welleford among six recipients of the 55th annual Richmond Humanitarian Awards.

The awards dinner in Short Pump honored individuals and organizations that have made significant contributions to the promotion of respect and understanding among people of diverse racial, ethnic, and religious in the Richmond area.

The VCIC traces its origins to 1935 in Lynchburg, where Catholic, Protestant and Jewish leaders came together to develop an educational program of communication and understanding. In 1963, the organization began its Richmond Humanitarian Awards tradition of honoring “the work of our friends, neighbors, and family members who gave to others the same rights, respect and dignity that they sought for themselves.”

Welleford was recognized for her work promoting optimal aging for individuals and communities, through her teaching, scholarship, and community engagement, including her work in the VCU Department of Gerontology and as co-lead of the Greater Richmond AgeWave Collaborative.

Gretchen M. Brophy, Pharm.D., BCPS, FCCP, FCCM, FNCS

Professor of Pharmacotherapy & Outcomes Sciences and Neurosurgery



Brophy has taken office as the 2017–18 president of the Neurocritical Care Society, an international, multidisciplinary medical society with more than 2,000 physician, nurse, pharmacist and resident/fellow members worldwide. She is the first nonphysician president of the society, the mission of which is to improve outcomes for patients with life-threatening neurological illnesses.

“My longtime involvement in NCS has helped advance my professional efforts and connect me with other health care providers and leaders worldwide,” Brophy said. “I look forward to serving as NCS president as a way to give back to this organization that has been of tremendous benefit to my esteemed colleagues and I in the neurocritical care profession.”

Brophy is a professor of pharmacotherapy and outcomes science and neurosurgery. She is also a neurocritical care clinical pharmacist at VCU Health. In addition to earning her doctor of pharmacy degree from the University of Arizona College of Pharmacy in Tucson, her postgraduate training includes residencies in critical care and pharmacy practice at the University of Kentucky Medical Center in Lexington.

Brophy’s research interests include effective treatment strategies for traumatic brain injury, brain injury biomarkers, neurocritical care, hemostasis, stroke, sedation and status epilepticus. She is an investigator for the National Institutes of Health, U.S. Department of Defense and industry-funded studies. An invited speaker at national and international conferences, she publishes in the area of neurocritical care.

Brophy is a board-certified pharmacotherapy specialist and a fellow of the NCS as well as the American College of Clinical Pharmacy and American College of Critical Care Medicine.

VCU SOD Faculty Highlights



Gloria F. Callihan, J.D., associate dean of development and alumni relations, earned the International Advanced Diploma in Fundraising, a master's-level course offered by the Association of Fundraising Professionals and the Institute of Fundraising through Plymouth University (UK).



Riki Gottlieb, D.M.D., M.S., FAGD, associate professor and assistant dean of admissions, participated in the American Dental Education Association's advocacy efforts in Washington, D.C. She is a fellow in the ADEA Leadership Institute's Class of 2018. Fellows are selected from a competitive pool of applicants and commit to three years of leadership enrichment and preparation programming.



Kim Isringhausen, M.P.H., assistant professor and chair of Oral Health Promotion and Community Outreach, was named assistant dean for Community and Collaborative Partnerships.



Jaisri Thoppay, D.D.S., M.B.A., M.S., assistant professor and director, oral medicine, orofacial pain and geriatric programs, completed a 200-hour faculty development program offered by the Virginia Geriatric Education Center, a consortium of faculty from VCU, Eastern Virginia Medical School and the University of Virginia.

TENURE in the School of Medicine

Dipankar Bandyopadhyay, Ph.D. Biostatistics

Andrew Barnes, Ph.D. Health Behavior & Policy

James M. Bjork, Ph.D. Psychiatry

Seth Corey, M.D. Pediatrics

Zheng Fu, Ph.D. Human and Molecular Genetics

Nathan Gillespie, Ph.D. Psychiatry

Adam P. Klausner, M.D. Surgery

Jasmin Vassileva, Ph.D. Psychiatry

David Wheeler, Ph.D. Biostatistics

PROMOTION TO PROFESSOR in the School of Medicine

Dipankar Bandyopadhyay, Ph.D. Biostatistics

J. Christian Barrett, M.D. Internal Medicine

Norman Boardman, M.D. Orthopaedic Surgery

Teresa Carter, Ed.D. Faculty Development

Jonathan M. Dort, M.D. Surgery (Inova)

Lance Hampton, M.D. Surgery

Michael Idowu, M.D., MPH Pathology

PROMOTION TO PROFESSOR in the School of Dentistry

Dr. Alfred Certosimo

Dr. Todd Kitten

Dr. Dean DeLuke

VCU Faculty In Memoriam



BROOKS, Carol Nibley, DDS, of Richmond, passed away peacefully on Monday, October 2, 2017. She graduated from the MCV School of Dentistry in 1994. She went on to teach and mentor dental students until she retired June 30, 2017. She was loved by patients and students alike because of her generous, serving spirit. She helped start the Mission of Mercy Projects, traveling all over the Commonwealth providing free dental services to those in need. She is survived by her mother, Marjorie Nibley; brothers, Neil and Reed Nibley; and by her daughter, Jennifer Gough (Roy); and son, Seth Brooks (Ann). She is also survived by her four beloved grandchildren, Skylar, Spencer, Avery and Malachi.



GRIMES, Margaret Mary, On May 15, 2017, the life of our beloved sister and aunt ended peacefully and with the dignity and grace with which she lived. Affectionately called "Mikie," she was inspired by our physician parents, Robert R. and Vera J. Grimes, to devote her life to family and church, and to the practice and teaching of medicine. She was born on December 9, 1949, and graduated from the Academy of the Holy Angels, Rosemont College and New York Medical College. Following a surgical pathology fellowship at Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons, she was a member of the faculty at Columbia Presbyterian Medical Center before joining the faculty of VCU School of Medicine in 1990. She retired as Professor of Pathology and Vice Chair for Pathology Education in March 2017. She was an active member of the teaching faculty and also held a Master's degree in Education for medical educators. She received numerous teaching awards including the Enrique Gerszten Faculty Teaching Award, the highest teaching award conferred by the VCU School of Medicine. She also served as program director for the Pathology Resident Training Program and was twice presented the Saul Kay Faculty Award by the Pathology residents. Dr. Grimes was recognized nationally for her professional excellence. She served as a Trustee and President of the American Board of Pathology. She was also involved in graduate medical education at the national level having served as Chair of the Program Directors Section of the Association of Pathology Chairs and was awarded the Distinguished Achievement Award in Graduate Medical Education. In addition to her medical career, she was a pianist who loved music, a good book and a family gathering. She is survived by her sisters, Anne Marie Grimes Whittemore and Regina Grimes Schwab; and her brother, Robert R. Grimes, S.J. Also surviving are her nephew, Robert P. Whittemore and his wife, Allison Johnson Whittemore, and their son, Reid P. Whittemore; her niece, Alexandra V. Schwab; and her brother-in-law, Stephen V. Schwab. She was predeceased by her brother-in-law, Robert H. Patterson Jr.



DRAGOESCU, Ema, MD 44, of Richmond, fell asleep in the Lord October 14, 2017. She is survived by her husband, Aleksei Oukolov; sister, Michaela Dumitrescu (Lucian) and their children, Lucia and Michael. Ema was an Associate Professor of Pathology at VCU.



JESSE, Dr. Robert "Bob" Louis M.D., Ph.D., passed away on September 2, 2017, at home in Richmond, Va., at the age of 64. Surrounded by his loving family, he departed this life too early after a short but valiant battle with cancer. His life enriched ours and his legacy will continue to impact and inspire us all long into the future. Bob was born in Oak Harbor, Wash., the second child of Harold and Alice Jesse. A lifelong learner, his formal education included University of New Hampshire (Biochemistry, 1974), Medical College of Virginia (Ph.D. Biophysics, 1980; MD 1984; Internal Medicine Residency; Cardiology fellowship). He had an illustrious medical career as professor at MCV/VCU and Chief of Cardiology at the VA Medical Center in Richmond, Va. Ultimately he became Principal Deputy Under Secretary for Health in the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs in Washington, D.C., serving as a tireless advocate for America's veterans for over 30 years. Despite the countless accolades for his academic expertise and visionary leadership, he remained humble, his biggest reward coming from taking care of his patients and being a mentor. Bob was a brilliant and fascinating man- a creative thinker, enthusiastic supporter and early adopter. He was thoughtful, humble, witty and compassionate- he impacted many as a husband, father, son, brother, uncle, friend, mentor, physician and colleague. His personal and professional interests were diverse and he approached them all with passion and expertise. He is survived by his adoring wife of over 40 years, Janice; son, Zachary; daughter, Amber Tillman (Josh); brothers, H. William Jesse Jr. (Jessica) and Phillip Jesse (Kay); sister, Mary Petersen (Robert); many loving nieces and nephews and an entire fan club of friends and supporters.

Leadership Opportunities

Virginia Commonwealth University

Grace E. Harris Leadership Institute

The Grace E. Harris Leadership Institute at Virginia Commonwealth University promotes the development of current and emerging leaders in academic institutions; public, private, and nonprofit organizations; and in the community. Leadership programs are based on the principles of collaboration and partnerships, with a strong commitment to long-term relationships between clients and participants. Additionally, the Institute researches and disseminates knowledge on the best practices in leadership.

<https://www.gehli.vcu.edu/>

Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) Leadership Development Program

The *VCU Leadership Development Program* is a 10-month program designed to enhance the knowledge, skills, and experience of current and emerging leaders at VCU who represent the academic and administrative units of the University and the VCU Health System.

<https://www.gehli.vcu.edu/programs/vcu-leadership-development/>

VCU HIGHER Ground Women's Leadership Development Program

The HIGHER Ground Women's Leadership Development Program is a five-month leadership development experience for current and emerging women leaders who are committed to investing in themselves and their organizations. The program is designed to benefit women at all career levels in public, private, nonprofit, and entrepreneurial positions.

<https://www.gehli.vcu.edu/programs/higher-ground-womens-leadership/>

Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC)

The AAMC provides executives, faculty, and administrators at member institutions with the skills required to lead and transform today's dynamic academic medical centers.

AAMC Leadership Education and Development (LEAD) Certificate Program

LEAD is a one-year, cohort-based program that provides a firm foundation in leadership best practices and recognized theoretical models that are key to advancing as an educational leader within academic medicine.

<https://www.aamc.org/members/leadership/catalog/364660/leadershipeducationanddevelopmentcertificateprogram.html>

AAMC Leadership and Management Foundations for Academic Medicine and Science

Leadership and Management Foundations for Academic Medicine and Science is designed to prepare new and emerging leaders to be successful in a leadership role, this seminar provides critical knowledge and skill-building experiences in core areas vital to leadership and management.

<https://www.aamc.org/members/leadership/catalog/452666/leadershipandmanagementfoundationsforacademicmedicineandscience.html>

Leadership Week

Three workshops over five days designed to provide participants with direct access to what it is to be a leader and what it is to exercise leadership effectively.

<https://www.aamc.org/members/leadership/catalog/464950/leadershipweek.html>

American Dental Education Association (ADEA)

ADEA offers the best continuing education programming to help keep you up-to-date in the ever evolving field of dental education. http://www.adea.org/professional_development/Pages/default.aspx

ADEA Leadership Institute

The ADEA Leadership Institute is a year-long program in four distinct phases that develops faculty members from all elements of dental education as future leaders in dental and higher education.

<http://www.adea.org/LeadershipInstitute/>

ADEA Allied Dental Faculty Leadership Development Program

The ADEA Allied Dental Faculty Leadership Development Program offers an interactive, intense, four-day training in leadership designed especially for allied dental faculty member or program directors.

<http://www.adea.org/alliedleadership/>

ADEA Summer Program for Emerging Academic Leaders

The ADEA Summer Program for Emerging Academic Leaders is designed for faculty members who have been at their institution for less than three years, and who have demonstrated the potential for making significant contributions to academic dentistry. The program focuses on helping faculty plan and implement successful academic careers by cultivating leadership, facilitating networking with colleagues and providing mentorship from leaders in dental education.

<http://www.adea.org/emergingleaders/>

Upcoming Events

WISDM Book Club

Feb 20: Watch and Discuss the Movie “Get Out”

March 28 , “The Left Hand of Darkness” by Ursula LeGuin

Check WISDM Book Club– VCU FB page for details of locations and times

Women In Medicine Student Organization

Women in Science Upcoming Events

February 12-23

Cinderella Dream Dress Drive , drop off of formal dresses/attire in boxes located on the 1st floor of Sanger, Wood, Lyons and Kontos building

February 23

Professional Development Seminar: VCU alumnus Dr. Hoke 12pm: Location TBD

March 16

Professional Development Seminar: Family Planning for PhD/MS/Post-Docs: Sanger 3016

March 19-30: Suit Yourself (Professional Attire) Drive Timing is tentative

April 14: Girl Scout Science Day

WISDM Leadership Conference: Save the Date!

April 27, 2018 11:30 AM– 6 PM Larrick Center

Executive Council

Contact Us

President: Kimberly Sanford, M.D.

President Elect: Kimbelry Isringhausen,

Secretary: Julie Coe, DDS, MS, MBA

Treasurer: Krishnasree Rao, M.D.

Members-At-Large

Jaisri Thoppay, DDS, MBA, MS

Jessica Frankenhoff, M.D.