March is Women's History Month, and I am proud to kick off this recognition for the Johns Hopkins Medicine community. Across our institution, women have always played a crucial role in advancing scientific research, clinical care and education.

In 1893, Mary Elizabeth Garrett provided financial support for the founding of the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine, with the historical precedent of admitting women on equal terms as men. Her early vision of gender equity ultimately changed the culture of the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine, from the hiring and promoting of women faculty members to the many achievements led by women pioneers in the medical fields. We would not be the remarkable organization we are today without women’s efforts.

Women’s Day, the first official nationwide recognition of women, occurred Feb. 28, 1909, in New York City as a way to recognize women’s rights and labor. In 1987, Congress designated March as Women’s History Month, recognizing how “American women of every race, class and ethnic background” played “a critical economic, cultural and social role in every sphere of our Nation’s life.”

Please take this opportunity to learn about the amazing ways your women colleagues who exemplify excellence and exhibit our core values improve their communities. Meet the Women’s History Month Achievers Award recipients: Emily Adams, clinical laboratory specialist, Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine; Katie Balter, clinical laboratory manager, Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine; Carlie Myers, pediatric intensive care fellow, Johns Hopkins Children’s Center/Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine; and Lydia Pecker, pediatric hematology director, Johns Hopkins Sickle Cell Center for Adults/Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine.

For an in-depth understanding of women’s history, health disparities, challenges and contributions to Johns Hopkins history, we invite you to read this heritage guide.

On March 8, International Women’s Day, we celebrate the social, economic, cultural and political achievements of women. Join the Johns Hopkins Medicine Office of Diversity, Inclusion and Health Equity and the Office of Well-Being as they host award-winning author Marita Golden for a session, “Redefining Strength, Power, Health, and Healing,” on Tuesday, March 8, from noon to 1:30 p.m. This session will focus on women’s mental health, a celebration of self and emotional rejuvenation. Golden will discuss the power and meaning of yes and no. Learn how to say yes to what you need and what celebrates and restores you, and discuss the mind/body connection — what it is and what it means. Register here to attend.

Thank you for joining me in celebrating women’s history — and the Johns Hopkins women who are making history today. We are better together.

Sincerely,
Sherita Hill Golden, M.D., M.H.S.
Vice President and Chief Diversity Officer
Johns Hopkins Medicine
March is: Women’s History Month

This month is dedicated to the reflection of the often-overlooked contributions of women to U.S. history. From Abigail Adams to Susan B. Anthony, Sojourner Truth, to Rosa Parks — the timeline of women’s impact stretches back to the founding of the United States. The actual celebration of Women’s History Month grew out of a weeklong celebration of women’s contributions to culture, history, and society organized by the school district of Sonoma, California, in 1978. A few years later, the idea had caught on within communities, school districts and organizations across the country. In 1980, the first Women’s History Month was declared. Two years later, Congress followed suit, passing a resolution establishing a national celebration. Six years later, the National Women’s History Project successfully petitioned Congress to expand the event to the entire month of March.

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Department Events

March 11: Department Research Seminar at Noon
Erika Avery

LOCATION: WEST LECTURE HALL, GROUND FLOOR PCB OR ZOOM

March 16: Research Seminar at Noon
Uron Boyman, PhD
Assistant Professor
Department of Physiology
University of Maryland

School of Medicine

“Regulation of ATP production by mitochondria”

LOCATION: WEST LECTURE HALL, GROUND FLOOR PCB OR ZOOM

Other Events

March 8: International Women’s Day
March 10: World Kidney Day
March 13: Daylight Savings Begins
March 18: Saint Patrick’s Day
March 20: First Day of Spring
March 31: International Transgender Day of Visibility
April 1: April Fool’s Day

PDCO Calendar

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Newsletter Team
Kelly Summers
Erica Avery
Misho Makena
Professor Rajini Rao

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What it means to be a woman in STEM, by newsletter editors Erica Avery and Kelly Summers

Erica Avery
6th Year Graduate Student, Claypool lab

There’s countless conversations I’ve had while at Hopkins with both women and men about what it’s like as a woman in STEM and a woman during this time in history. There’s too much to say and not enough space to fill all the experiences, lessons, and emotions that go along with it. Only recently has Hopkins really had a full internalexamined my I’ve held onto the intimations and considerable harassment in the past. I just let it go, in the way I didn’t stand up for myself, the assumptions and judgements people made about me because of my gender without knowing me, the way our culture and society conditions us, and how the Me Too movement opened my eyes. There were endless sexist comments made to me— even as a child— that were seared into my subconscious and damaging to my psyche and sense of self.

It has been the astonishing women in my family, molding me to be the person I am today with their extraordinary sense of humble, quiet strength and resilience. My mother is the strongest person I know yet not only never encouraged me to be a woman, but actively interfered in pursuing in acquiring one. In her world, women were told they were to be nurses or teachers. If she were a man, she would be a biomedical PhD, no doubt. Her mother, my grandmother, had endless ingenuity, was constantly creating “life hacks” before “life hacks” were a thing. She was beyond organized and kept track of everything, fastidiously with numbers— an engineer probably if born male. Benefited from her brilliance, but society never got to, I’d like to believe on the other side, she’d free to study what she never could have. I come from a line of women whose personalities I’m a carbon copy of, and I owe this PhD to them— the tribe of women who raised me. It is something they never allowed to achieve and has been in the making for generations. My aunt, my dad’s sister, a lawyer living in Manhattan, is the most feared, outspoken feminist I know, and I don’t know what I would have done without her fiery influence in my youth. The stories of downhearted women, who were just one of these women who had been appalled and disturbing, I stand on their shoulders, and I never take for granted their sacrifices. Still, I know every single one of us is grateful to have been a born woman and wouldn’t have it any other way.

I’ll never forget going to a meeting with a female mentor in the Wilmer Eye Institute in the hospital (back when in-person meetings were the norm) and passing a long, long hallway tightly lined with countless pictures of significant people in this hospital’s history, stretching back decades, many of them black-and-white photographs. It felt like a story was being written on the walls of the hallway— the walls you don’t feel like you fit in and you don’t feel like you belong or are welcome. It’s always been a hard service for women to preserve a seat at the table. At the time.

When I go to her office, she said, “I’m glad you found my office OK but not the mosaic and through the hallway of White Men.” I really did feel like a guest— like a story out of a Disney movie or Lord of the Rings. Clearly many women have had that same experience, got in, got over it, but having her validate it, me feel at ease with her.

When we were playing “Physiology Trivia” during virtual recruitment last year, one question was to name previous heads of the Physiology Department. I was jokingly shocked, “All white men.” I know change takes time, and I see so much diversity among us rising up the system now. I can’t imagine how much women scientists had to deal with a long time ago— women like Marie Curie surrounded by a sea of men; or women not given credit for their work. It’s really hard to imagine if women scientists would have had an easier time doing their research if they were men. At the end of the day, my model of the story is that representation matters and having women role models matters.

Kelly Summers
Postdoctoral Fellow, Lusotsker lab

Growing up, even in rural small-town Canada, I never felt at a disadvan-
thage being a girl. I later came to realize how much I owed this experience to my parents. They encouraged me to try new activities and not just traditionally feminine-dominated activities. I played softball, I raced go-karts. I actually remember, quite distinctly, a conversation my mom had with my grandmother about the go-karts. I was nine-years-old, and my dad had bought this old go-kart and fixed it up for my brother because he was really into it. The yard was even more than he did. So, my dad bought a second one and modified both karts to race. My grandfather, being from an older generation, says “Are you really going to let her race that thing?” and my dad calmly just shouts and says “Sure as hell no.” Later, my dad built a kart for my little sister too.

Like Erica, it wasn’t until I entered graduate school that I realized just how much I owed my experience as a woman in STEM. And it wasn’t until the widespread par-
ticipation in the Me Too movement that I realized that so many women like me have had negative experiences. Sometimes it’s less obvious– it’s the microaggressions, the assumptions made based on gender. There’s no question it was part of the culture. Personally, I felt that lab, that university, and that culture, and sought out mentors that helped me escape the scolding and the guilt.

It’s funny the moments I remember now as being somewhat defining moments where I witnessed my mentors stand up for equity and inclusivity in STEM. I was once in a meeting with a group of col-
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Awards and Accomplishments

Monish Makena from the Rao lab won a Young Investigator’s Day award in the postdoctoral category on March 4.

Nanami Senoo from the Claypool lab also won a Young Investigator’s Day award in the postdoctoral category. Physiology is sweeping the competition AGAIN this year!

Publications

Hannah Pierson, a former postdoctoral fellow in the Lutsenko lab, wrote and published a children’s life sciences book entitled “Molecular Biology Alphabet” as a way of explaining her day in the lab and doing research to her children. It can be found on Amazon.

Resource of the Month

The Liver Cell Atlas has a compilation of single cell sequencing data sets with information about protein expression in various liver cells from several commonly used laboratory animals, as well as humans.