

Editorial

## Bringing research to life: a collaborative partnership dedicated to improving reproductive health care

The Society of Family Planning (SFP) and the Association of Reproductive Health Professionals (ARHP) are two organizations with different but complementary missions. Together, we write this editorial in order to raise awareness of how we work collaboratively, specifically around translating scientific research in family planning and abortion into direct patient care.

As *Contraception's* two sponsoring organizations, SFP and ARHP represent a productive model for professional partnerships that can address key scientific issues while ultimately helping improve the quality of care. Academic societies like SFP, through their support for evidence-based research and development of practice guidelines, can enhance the effectiveness of professional education organizations like ARHP that develop continuing medical education programs and learning environments for health care providers of all disciplines and specialties.

SFP and ARHP support the recommendation from Bradley et al. [1] that professional partnerships are an effective mechanism for disseminating the latest science and evidence regarding best practices. Carefully developed clinical guidelines help health care providers translate science into their daily interactions with patients. According to Ornstein et al. [2], “A well-crafted guideline promotes quality by reducing health-care variations, improving diagnostic accuracy, promoting effective therapy, and discouraging ineffective — or potentially harmful — interventions.” Clinical guidelines are also an essential component of effective training and education programs for health professionals [3].

Furthermore, the pressing public health issue of contraception and obesity provides an excellent example of how an effective partnership between a medical society such as SFP and a professional education group like ARHP can help work in tandem to translate research into practice with the goal of improving patient care.

The leadership of the SFP identified a pressing need to address health risks associated with obesity among patients seeking contraceptive care. Unfortunately, the relationship between obesity and contraception has not been extensively studied, yet the need for provider education on the topic and the opportunity for improving the health of overweight patients

were compelling. SFP's response was to develop an evidence-based clinical guideline on contraceptive considerations in obese women, recently published in *Contraception* [4].

As an accrediting agency for continuing medical and pharmacist education, ARHP is working to address this same need in practice by infusing SFP's guidelines into appropriate professional education platforms that address the issue of contraception and obesity. ARHP develops professional learning opportunities that incorporate the latest in adult learning theory, provider behavior analysis and clinical research to help fill the wide gap between available evidence and current practice in health care [1,5-10].

The fundamental reason reproductive health professionals pursue training, conduct research, formulate curricula, establish guidelines, develop continuing education and provide clinical care is to positively impact peoples' lives.

There is no doubt of the need to continue conducting rigorous scientific research, but we are limiting ourselves and our patients if we do not increase our investment in the development of evidence-based clinical guidelines and ensure their translation into practice through education and systems change. SFP and ARHP leaders advocate for a systems approach to improving the reproductive health of all people that includes collaboration between research institutions, academic societies, education groups, advocates and health care providers.

The challenge for the reproductive health professional community is to continue emphasizing the importance of clinical and behavioral research to inform our field, while working diligently to translate that research into practice. We must also work together to advocate for evidence-based policies that support the delivery of effective health care to the public. In addition, we need a better scientific understanding of how health education systems can more successfully develop the infrastructure and flexibility necessary to achieve better health outcomes at a reasonable cost.

SFP and ARHP represent a model partnership that addresses two critical steps toward improving reproductive care: professional societies like SFP focus on promoting research and developing practical, evidence-based guidelines for frontline health care providers, and organizations with a professional education mission like ARHP work to

incorporate these guidelines and the latest clinical and behavioral science into their continuing professional education and advocacy efforts. In the end, the outcome from this partnership is a better quality of life for patients, an essential goal we can all endorse.

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