



Australian Federation
of **Medical Women**
the voice of australian medical women

Bridging Leadership Barriers Project 2008-09

afmw.org.au

FINAL REPORT

30 June 2009

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This document reports on the Australian Federation of Medical Women's Bridging Leadership Barriers Project 2008-09. The project was made possible by a \$89,000 grant from the Australian Government Office For Women's 2007-08 Leadership and Development Programme Grants. AFMW gratefully acknowledges this grant.

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Executive Summary

The “Bridging Leadership Barriers” Project has strengthened women’s voices and representation in existing national and academic and health networks. This has enabled women’s contributions to be fully realised, and their skills fittingly applied, in meeting the Australian community’s medical education and healthcare needs.

Female doctors have disproportionately high levels of suicide and depression (with the latter 10 times that of the general population). Advocating for alterations to medical training is central to addressing these issues.

It is well recognised that females have different professional needs to their male colleagues. “Feminising” — or indeed “normalising” — medical training has the potential to bring significant benefits to all medical students, doctors and their future patients; however, it requires major input from individuals and organisations who understand gender differences, issues and barriers.

Female doctors also have disproportionately less representation on national professional executives than their male colleagues. While medical organisations often have women’s advisory groups that provide views on pertinent gender-relevant issues, it is the Australian Federation of Medical Women’s (AFMW’s) experience that gender-based views presented to male-dominated hierarchical structures receive a lower priority than the advisory boards wish. Both representation and leadership by women in medicine are vital to facilitate gender-sensitive decisions, teaching and research.

As the only national organisation exclusively representing female medical practitioners, AFMW is well placed to advocate for change; increasing the organisation’s capacity by expanding its communication networks has the potential to achieve significant cultural change — and, importantly, has begun to do so.

The Bridging Leadership Barriers project comprised multiple components, including leadership and website-skills training, \$15,000 in leadership scholarships, completely redeveloping the AFMW website, establishing an AFMW Leadership Skills Database, creating an online Leadership Portal and improving communication networks and strategies, such as the quarterly AFMW e-newsletter.

AFMW has evaluated the “Bridging Leadership Barriers” Project to be highly successful. It has demonstrated that promoting women’s social inclusion and

building women's capacity to take on greater leadership responsibilities can contribute to developing public policy and service delivery. The project has also built AFMW's capacity, as a non-government organisation, to represent member views; this too, has helped in developing public policy and service delivery

While government funding for this project ran through FY07-08, success in its first year will see the AFMW continue aspects of the project, including the Leadership Portal, leadership training and website development and skills training.

Acknowledgements

On behalf of the Australian Federation of Medical Women (AFMW), the author extends these acknowledgements:

- The AFMW Executive and the Organising Committee for the Medical Women's International Association Western Pacific Regional Congress Dr Desiree Yap, Dr Jan Coles, Dr Kate Duncan, Dr Susie Close, Dr Gabrielle Casper, Associate Professor Deborah Colville, Dr Sharon Tivey, Dr Liz Rickman, Dr Kathleen Hayes and Dr Raie Goodwach
- Dr Atsuko Heshiki, Ms Shirli Kirschner and Mr David Bryson for their contributions to the Leadership Skills Workshops at the MWIA Western Pacific Regional Congress October 17, 2008
- Ms Dinah (Dex) Randall for her contributions to the AFMW website and website teaching workshops and resources
- Ms Natalie Morey and Ms Melissa Morey from The Lifestylers Group for administrative assistance
- Ms Samantha Schelling of The Word Co. for writing and publication expertise
- Ms Stephanie Thompson for design expertise
- Ms Vicki Hayward of SED Consulting for strategic planning expertise
- The AFMW Leadership Scholarship applicants and recipients
- The Australian Government – the Australian Federation of Medical Women Bridging Leadership Barriers project has been funded by the Australian Government through the Women's Leadership and Development Programme

But most of all,



The inspiring Dr Constance Stone, Australia's first woman doctor and founder of the [Victorian Medical Women's Society](http://afmw.org.au/vic) in 1896. The vision of Dr Stone and the formidable ladies who joined her was to change the course of history, setting a benchmark for women's health in Australia and around the globe. To learn more about Dr Stone's remarkable achievements please visit <http://afmw.org.au/vic>.



Australian Federation of Medical Women

About

The Australian Federation of Medical Women (AFMW) was formed in 1927 to promote and develop the formal practice of medicine among women. It is the only national body that exclusively represents the views of female medical practitioners, and is a non-profit, non-government organisation with affiliated state member bodies.

Vision

The voice of Australian medical women advocating, supporting and leading the health and welfare of our local, national and international communities.

Statement of Purpose

We offer our members, colleagues and the community access to the collective knowledge and experiences of medical women and ensure equity and equality for women doctors to achieve their potential throughout all stages of their professional lives.

Philosophy

AFMW philosophy is enshrined in these key principles:

Caring	For all persons in the Australian community, particularly women and children.
Respect	Promote respect for diversity and difference.
Service	Motivated by free will and the absence of any financial or non-financial gain.
Equity	Achieving fairness while recognising different experiences, needs, levels of power, access and expectations and ways of expressing illness.

Equality	The absence of bias, for all people, in opportunities and the allocation of resources with the purpose of achieving equitable outcomes.
Human Rights	Uphold the principles of human rights as defined by the United Nations.
Gender Competence	Promote gender competence in knowledge, education, research and health service provision, reflecting the capacity to identify where difference, on the basis of gender, is significant and act in ways that produce more equitable outcomes for men and women.
Development	Further the development of medical women through education and research particularly in relation to the health of women and children.

Organisation Profile

The Federation aims to further the professional development of medical women through education and research, and to improve the health and welfare of all Australians — especially women and children.

It participates in health-policy development and service delivery, increasing women's voice in existing national academic and health areas so that the contributions of women can be fully realised and their skills fittingly applied to meet the medical education and healthcare needs of all Australians.

AFMW's advocacy involves many and varied activities on behalf of its constituents and in the general health field, including:

- addressing domestic violence, discrimination, bullying, harassment and occupational violence
- informing governments about medical women's perspectives (latterly this has included meetings with policy advisors and participating in the CEDAW (The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women) round-table discussions)
- promoting and facilitating professional mentoring, providing leadership skills training to medical women
- examining provisions for flexible training and retraining to promote workplace retention and re-entry of female doctors

Memberships and Affiliations

AFMW is a member of the Australian Women's Coalition (a group of women's organisations that works collaboratively to advance the status of women, by presenting the views of Australian women to Government) and the WomenSpeak Network, a non-government secretariat that provides representative advice on policy issues affecting women, including childcare, women's health, women's leadership, young women, the role of men and boys in gender equity and violence against women).

AFMW is affiliated with the Medical Women's International Association (MWIA), the international umbrella for all the national medical women's societies. The MWIA is actively involved with the United Nations as an NGO, the World Health Organisation (WHO), the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations and UNICEF. It is represented on the Board of the General Council of International Organisation of the Medical Sciences, and has NGO-observer status to the World Medical Association.

MWIA's aims are to:

- promote co-operation between medical women from different countries and to develop friendship and understanding between medical women worldwide
- actively work against gender-related inequalities in the medical profession between female and male doctors, including career opportunities and economic aspects
- offer medical women the opportunity to meet, to confer questions concerning the health and well-being of humanity.
- overcome gender-related differences in health and healthcare between women and men, girl-child and boy-child throughout the world

MWIA sprang from the first international congress of women doctors, held in 1919, in New York, USA. This congress, attended by 140 guests from 16 nations, comprised a dinner to honour distinguished medical women who had just returned from medical relief work in France. MWIA held its first international congress in 1922.



AFMW membership confers automatic membership of MWIA. MWIA provides its members with the opportunity to exchange ideas, medically and personally, with colleagues from other nations.

AFMW Objectives as an MWIA Affiliate

1. To stimulate, encourage and promote the entry of women into the medical sciences and help them to optimally use their medical training.
2. To foster friendship, respect and understanding among medical women throughout the world, without regard to race, religion or political views.
3. To afford medical women the opportunity to meet at stated times to consider common problems together and gain the co-operation of medical women in matters in health.
4. To promote the interest of medical women in all matters relating to their professional work through continuing education and other means.
5. To act for and represent medical women in all matters of mutual interest at national and international levels, and, in particular, in relation to the further education of Australian medical women.

Bridging Leadership Barriers Project

Objectives

1. Deliver leadership skills training to female health professionals at the Medical Women's International Association Western Pacific Regional Congress (MWIA WPRC).
2. Promote leadership discussions and leadership activities among women doctors.
3. Provide increased opportunities for medical women in rural and remote areas to attend and participate in the MWIA WPRC by providing \$15,000 in leadership scholarships.
4. Build a leadership skills portal at the AFMW website accessible to all Australian women, with training material directed at enhancing leadership abilities and confidence in undertaking leadership positions.
5. Develop a medical leadership skills database that will allow AFMW to access and provide specialist medical expertise, increasing its advisory capacity to inform and drive health-policy development and service delivery.
6. Enable effective communication between medical women at a state and national level, enabling national debate on policy and service-delivery issues.
7. Enhance health-service delivery through increased capacity of female health professionals to represent their communities' views and contribute to developing public policy and service delivery.
8. Enhance health-service delivery through increased capacity of the AFMW to represent members' views and contribute to the development of public policy and service delivery.
9. Encourage enhanced participation of rural and remote female doctors within AFMW and the health arena, resulting in greater social inclusion and reduced professional isolation.

10. Deliver website content-management training to female health professionals using the award-winning Joomla! system to provide technical skills that are readily transferable to other internet-based projects and applications.
11. Deliver electronic newsletter production skills to female health professionals.
12. Develop an integrated AFMW website, with regularly updated content from all active member states. This will allow the activities and achievements of medical women to be promoted online and encourage women to become active in their state and national medical women's organisations.
13. Develop enhanced communication between the AFMW and its members and stakeholders in the form of a quarterly electronic newsletter.
14. To distribute information about conferences and educational activities conducted by not-for-profit organisations to maximise women's exposure to professional education opportunities.

Outcomes

The project met all objectives, including:

- improved communication networks among AFMW and its members through effective use of internet technology
- enhanced opportunities for women in remote areas to communicate with their peers and participate in internet-based training
- enhanced access to medical expertise (via the Leadership Skills Database) to assist AFMW to inform and drive health-policy development and service development

Initiatives

- \$15,000 in leadership scholarships to assist medical women to attend the MWIA WPRC
- leadership and website skills training workshops at the MWIA WPRC
- redeveloping the AFMW website, creating a more user-friendly, accessible website with up-to-date content, news and resources
- creating an online Leadership Portal, containing resources that enhance medical women's leadership skills
- developing a regular electronic AFMW newsletter, beginning January 2009
- creating a skills database of medical women who are willing to be consulted on issues of importance in their field(s) of interest

Medical Women's International Association

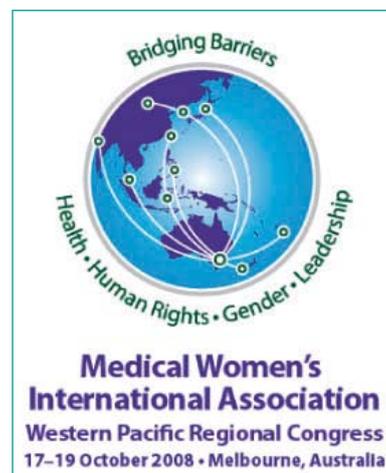
– Western Pacific Regional Congress

The Medical Women's International Association Western Pacific Regional Congress was held in Melbourne on October 17-19, 2008. The Congress theme was "Women Doctors in the Western Pacific: Bridging Barriers", with medical women from around the Asia-Pacific attending.

The Congress themes were:

- the environment and health
- impact of violence/war/terrorism on women and children
- professional issues for women in medicine
- innovations in health promotion
- infections and vaccines
- advocacy and health politics

The Congress identified and discussed effective ways in which women doctors could bridge barriers through advocacy; overcoming regional issues adversely affecting the health and well-being of women and children; and exploring global and local environmental issues as determinants of public health. Other issues covered included innovations and interventions used to promote health and prevent illness, along with identifying professional issues — and their solutions — for women in medicine. Abstracts and papers from the MWIA WPRC are available online to registered users at <http://afmw.org.au/mwia>



Right above: Logo for the MWIA Western Pacific Regional Congress October 2008.



Above: The environment and health session was chaired by AFMW Treasurer Dr Sharon Tivey, an Anaesthetist who has been involved with the Medical Women's Society of NSW since her internship.

Right: Dr Liz Rickman (L), AFMW Secretary, with Dr Carol Booth (R), an AFMW Scholarship recipient. Dr Rickman has worked in a variety of locations, including remote Aboriginal communities. She has been active in the peace, women's and environmental movements, leading to a stint as a medic at sea with Greenpeace.





Above and Below: Many attendees at the Gala Dinner dressed in traditional clothing, which was of great interest particularly to younger Congress visitors, plus added to the social inclusion aspects of the event.



Leadership Skills

While the reasons for medical women's under-representation in senior leadership positions are unclear, studies — and commonsense — have shown there is a need for opportunities to improve medical women's leadership capability. Without these opportunities, the profession would suffer a lack of diversity of the work styles and values that women inherently bring, as well as cutting off much of the capable pool of candidates to potentially fill such senior positions.

Studies have also shown that building confidence, proposing management strategies and providing networking opportunities to women in medicine greatly increase leadership involvement. For instance, in one study, involvement increased from 38% to 80% within 5 years (Richman R.C., Morahan P.S., Cohen D.W., McDade S.A., 2001).

Evaluating leadership courses run by both AFMW and state medical women's societies since 2002 has consistently shown participants' increasing confidence to undertake leadership roles.

These reasons, along with the strong interest medical women had previously shown, are major reasons why the "Bridging Leadership Barriers" Project focused on leadership training.

(reference above: Richman RC, Morahan PS, Cohen DW, McDade SA. "Advancing women and closing the leadership gap: the Executive Leadership in Academic Medicine (ELAM) program experience." J Womens Health Gen Based Med 2001;10(3):271-7.)

Leadership Skills Workshops

Leadership-skills training was part of the "Bridging Leadership Barriers" Project. Sessions were held on Friday 17 October 2008, at the MWIA Congress.

The sessions comprised a negotiation skills workshop by Shirli Kirschner and David Bryson. Immediate Past President of MWIA Dr Gaye Casper and the author (Dr Jill Tomlinson) also presented on leadership topics. The author and MWIA President Dr Atsuko Heshiki chaired the sessions.

Right: (L-R) Dr Jill Tomlinson; Dr Atsuko Heshiki, MWIA President; Shirli Kirschner; Dr Gaye Casper, MWIA Immediate Past President; and David Bryson. Dr Tomlinson developed the "Bridging Leadership Barriers" project, which provided leadership-skills training to medical women from Australia and overseas. Sessions comprised a negotiation-skills workshop, presented by Ms Kirschner and Mr Bryson. Drs Casper and Tomlinson also presented on leadership in medical organisations. Along with Dr Heshiki, Dr Tomlinson also chaired the sessions.



Scholarships

The “Bridging Leadership Barriers” Project provided \$15,000 funding for 22 leadership scholarships to Australian medical women to attend the MWIA WPRC. These were awarded on a needs basis, primarily to medical students, with preference shown to medical women from rural and remote areas. Without this funding, most would not have been able to attend.

The excellent leadership essays these women have contributed to the AFMW website demonstrate their passion and enthusiasm.

Scholarship Testimonials

Recipients were asked to describe how receiving an AFMW Leadership Scholarship impacted them professionally and personally. The 6 below represent a good cross section.

Testimonial 1:

“Receiving an AFMW Leadership Scholarship really encouraged me personally — in my confidence in my own capabilities. Professionally, I learnt many more leadership qualities that I was unaware of, or found hard to implement before attending the conference. It also made me more aware just how important leadership qualities are for my future practice and in general life. Professionally, I also gained a lot of respect for my fellow peers and also leaders in many fields of medicine.

“It gave me more enthusiasm for my future career, kept my drive to achieve and complete my medical course. It encouraged me to strive for the best possible experiences I can gain whilst training.

“It was a brilliant opportunity to meet a lot of inspiring women, who have succeeded in their endeavours in medicine, whilst still having a life outside of medicine — including having a partner, children and a range of different hobbies and social lives.

“It really encouraged me to get further involved in the Victorian Medical Women’s Society, as the people involved in it were inspiring to me; I also felt that I could contribute and encourage my fellow peers in my course to get involved.

“Without the scholarship, I would not have been able to attend the Congress, as I am a student who is trying to survive day-to-day costs of accommodation, food and education (my parents have other children to support as well). Not currently studying in the city of Melbourne, but a rural region, meant the travel to get there, and accommodation, would have been impossible to afford.

“My most inspiring memories of the Congress, were actually talking individually to many different female doctors of all different backgrounds, and hearing their personal stories and views on their achievements and beliefs about their career and life.”

— Annie Kilpatrick

Testimonial 2:

“The AFMW Leadership Scholarship enabled me to attend a conference on medicine for women, in an environment that encouraged identification and discussion of issues important to women.

“There was particular interest in the Women in Surgery discussion, which highlighted the best and the worst of experiences of women who have chosen the demanding career of surgery. The forum showcased the trials faced by a number of female surgeons-in-training, as presented by Dr Sharon Metcalfe, including examples of difficulties faced in attaining work-life balance and examples of discrimination in the workplace. For another perspective, Dr Kate Drummond, a Melbourne-based neurosurgeon, provided her experience in the surgical field. She shared examples of the opportunities and challenges she has been presented during her training.

“The Congress, more importantly, allowed medical students who are interested in women’s health issues to consider pursuing a number of actions. Firstly, practically applying their medical knowledge to advance women’s health; secondly, joining advocacy groups concerning the women’s rights in the workplace and most importantly, the necessity of support and empathy amongst women practitioners at all stages of their career.

“I have appreciated the generosity of the AFMW in awarding me a scholarship to attend the Congress. It came at a time where I was about to commence life as an intern and consider how a career in surgery and decisions about family would affect my work-life balance.”

— Grace Lai

Testimonial 3:

“As a student, the AFMW Leadership Scholarship allowed me to attend the Congress and participate in the Leadership Workshops, which included website-skills training. The Congress provided me many opportunities to meet many inspiring women doctors from around Asia Pacific, and allowed me to converse with like-minded women about professional issues relating to women in medicine. I was also able to learn about roles within advocacy for women’s and children’s health, and the devastating effects of climate change on public health.

“Since the Congress, I have been more actively involved in my local medical women’s society (VMWS) and feel more confidence in discussing issues relating to advocacy and women’s roles within medicine.”

— Linny K. Phuong (6th Year Medical Student)

Testimonial 4:

“I was honoured to be awarded an AFMW scholarship to attend the MWIA Western Pacific Regional Congress, as attending this conference would not have been possible otherwise. This conference was very encouraging and the opportunity to network with other women in medicine was priceless. This conference boosted my confidence and interpersonal skills and allowed me insight into what it is truly like to have a career in medicine as a woman.

“I would like to thank you immensely for this wonderful opportunity.”

— Morgan Brennan

Testimonial 5:

“Attending the MWIA Western Pacific Regional Congress through the support of an AFMW Leadership Scholarship was a fantastic opportunity which I otherwise would not have had. I particularly enjoyed the session dedicated to “advocacy and the media” — a panel discussion featuring prominent industry professionals — which allowed participants to learn ideas and strategies for effectively advocating in the media. The advocacy skills I learned at the Congress inspired me to devote more time and energy to advocacy, and I thus decided to complete a research project over the summer which related to healthcare professionals’ advocacy skills. Furthermore, the Congress provided an exciting chance as a student to meet and learn from other medical women.”

— Rachel Heenan

Testimonial 6:

“Being at the commencement of my professional medical life, I was well aware of the importance of teamwork and effective leadership in the medical profession. This workshop gave me the formal opportunity to explore and enhance my skills in this area through both active and passive learning. Without a doubt, I believe the most valuable session of the day involved using our new knowledge in role-plays and then debriefing within our group. The mixture of medical students and medical professionals allowed broad discussion of topics and provided the chance to gain advice from those who have personal experience.”

— Mikhaila Lazanyi

Leadership Skills Database

The Leadership Skills Database was launched online and at the MWIA WPRC in October 2008. Medical women from rural and metropolitan areas have enlisted, providing AFMW with access to specialist medical expertise in a wide variety of areas from medical women with diverse backgrounds and practices.

The database will serve several functions, including:

- AFMW member knowledge can be used to drive health-policy development and service delivery
- significantly increase communication between AFMW and its members
- increase individual AFMW members' leadership capacity, so they can use this ability to advocate the issues that are important to medical women

Application forms continue to be distributed and promoted across Australia, with continued growth projected for the database in future years.

Right: *The Leadership Skills Database Information Form.*

Australian Federation of Medical Women
The voice of specialist medical women

An invitation to provide your expertise to improve medicine and health in Australia

Do you want to improve medicine and health in Australia? The Australian Federation of Medical Women (AFMW) invites you to participate in an initiative that will enhance the opportunities for both individuals and AFMW to contribute to public health policy and service delivery.

Medical women have a wealth of expertise, experience and ideas on how to improve medicine in Australia. However, their voices often go unheard and they lack access to opportunities and forums that would allow them to foster change.

AFMW is often approached by government and non-government organisations to participate in debates and provide expert views on health and workforce issues. Often the timeframes are short, or the issue is an unexpected one. We currently have no systematic way of identifying medical women to consult with or to have attend readings about these issues. Currently we are unable to access the vast wealth of expertise and experience that medical women possess.

To address these concerns AFMW is building a database of medical women who are willing to share their ideas in their areas of expertise, experience and interest. We will use the information obtained to offer interested doctors opportunities to provide their expertise and counsel to Health Policy Issues and other organisations that approach AFMW for advice. Participants will also have the opportunity to discuss their ideas and consult on the formulation of consensus opinions both for AFMW and the Medical Women's International Association (MWIA), our international parent organisation that is actively involved with the United Nations as a Non Governmental Organisation and has official working relations with the World Health Organisation (WHO), the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).

We encourage all medical women to take part in this initiative - each medical woman has a wealth of expertise and experience to offer, and often from a different perspective. If you are interested in improving Australian medicine please register by completing the form overleaf and returning it to AFMW. AFMW will hold your details on file and will advise you when an issue of interest to you is raised, offering you the opportunity to participate in discussions. Your contact details will not be provided to a third party without your express consent. You may decline to participate or opt out at any time. You do not have to be a member of AFMW to join the database.

We hope to hear from you!

The Australian Federation of Medical Women aims to further the professional development of medical women through education and research and to improve the health and welfare of all persons, especially Australian women and children. The AFMW acts for and represents medical women in all matters of mutual interest at national and international levels.

<http://afmw.org.au>

2009 CLW Leadership Achievement Award

For work in this “Bridging Leadership Barriers” Project, the author received the Australian Virtual Centre for Leadership for Women (CLW)’s 2009 “National Leadership Achievement for Women Award”.

Part of the CLW’s mission is to:

- explore approaches to overcome gender biases that impact on women’s leadership
- encourage the involvement of women, who are in a range of leadership positions, to act as role models to reflect the diverse perspectives and styles they represent
- lobby relevant public and private organisations to create pathways for women’s leadership
- research issues of concern to women and suggest strategies to relevant organisations to resolve barriers against women

In bestowing the award, the CLW said, *“With the vision to empower medical women, providing doctors and medical students with leadership skills and improved networking and mentoring opportunities, Dr Jill Tomlinson designed a project under the auspices of the Australian Federation of Medical Women (AFMW) to foster communication, networking, respect, leadership ability and opportunities among medical women. Successfully gaining funding, Dr Tomlinson awarded twenty-two AFMW Leadership Scholarships totalling \$15,000 to medical women to attend the Medical Women’s International Association (MWIA) Western Pacific Regional Congress in Melbourne in October 2008.*

“This, and Dr Tomlinson’s other leadership initiatives for medical women is being recognised by CLW’s 2009 Leadership Achievement for Women Award, launched in 2005, aiming to honour women in the community who use their own initiative to create and implement projects for the benefit of the community and in collaboration with the community.”

(Source: www.leadershipforwomen.com.au)

The author gratefully accepted the award, believing it highlighted the importance of AFMW’s web and leadership strategies.

Website Redevelopment

Redeveloping the Federation's website (<http://afmw.org.au>) was one of the main aims of this project.

The website performs many functions:

- to promote AFMW
- to promulgate information about AFMW activities, initiatives and opportunities
- to act as an information resource for medical women for topics including women and children's health, women in medicine, medical training and practice, gender, leadership, violence prevention, advocacy and mentoring
- to provide information about upcoming conferences and educational activities
- to provide information about AFMW's vision, philosophy and organisational structure
- to provide web links to other relevant websites and resources
- to build online networking and communication between medical women, both medically and socially

The web portal exponentially expands the project's reach, not only benefiting those who participated in the training sessions, but by providing an online resource centre with the capacity to enhance the confidence, skills, reputation, professionalism and prospects of all women who access its contents.

The website Leadership Portal's resources and information are suitable for undergraduates right through to specialists and clinical leaders (see Appendix F).

The site also includes information and links to the Medical Women's International Association (MWIA), plus carries that body's latest newsletter (see Appendix G for latter).

The site's content was created by, and is maintained by, medical women volunteers. It uses the open-source (free) content management system Joomla! (See Appendix H: What is Joomla!?)

Importance of Web Platform

Internet-based learning portals are increasingly relevant as Generation Y enters the workforce. As with many other professions, medical education is seeing rapid expansion of internet and computer-based learning, too. Internet technologies are also increasingly relevant for rural and remote workforces. In AFMW's case, the internet gives health professionals in these regions increased knowledge of AFMW's activities in areas relevant to their needs, encouraging their buy-in and participation in policy development and service delivery, as well as increasing their social inclusion.



Above: AFMW website, <http://afmw.org.au>

However, technological-skills training has also been important for medical women who graduated before the “computer age” to gain much-needed skills not available in their undergraduate or postgraduate curriculum.

Anecdotal evidence from state medical women's societies had suggested a significant proportion of the medical workforce has extremely limited computer skills, but that medical women rapidly learn and master computer-based skills when given personalised teaching in a non-confrontational environment.

In the past couple of years, the Victorian and NSW state medical women's societies have begun simple websites to communicate with members. These sites' success was an integral stepping stone for the AFMW website redevelopment, which has delivered an integrated national website with greater cohesion, features and power.

From a leadership viewpoint, the leadership skills, communication and web-related educational resource packages that have been developed and posted on the website, both promote skills and enhance medical women's contributions and confidence. Indeed the website's easy accessibility means all Australian professionals can benefit.

Due to the website's success, the Leadership Portal, leadership training and website development and training will continue through AFMW's resources now this project's funding has ceased.

The screenshot shows a Google search interface. The search bar contains the text "medical women". Below the search bar, it indicates "Search: the web pages from Australia". The results section shows "Results 1 - 10 of about 121,000,000 for medical women. (0.32 seconds)". The top result is "Health for Women" with the URL "www.healthforwomen.org.au" and a description "Information on women's health, nutrition and emotional wellbeing". Below this, several other results are listed, including "Australian Federation of Medical Women", "Physician medical women's Online Advice and Diagnosis", "American Medical Women's Association", "Australian Army Medical Women's Service (AAMWS) - Organisation ...", "OBGYN Women's Health: Obstetrics, Gynecology, Menopause ...", "Welcome to Medical Online - Medical Dictionary of Medical Terms ...", "Medical Women's Federation Home Page", and "Women's Health - Medical Centre Brisbane - Pap Smear".

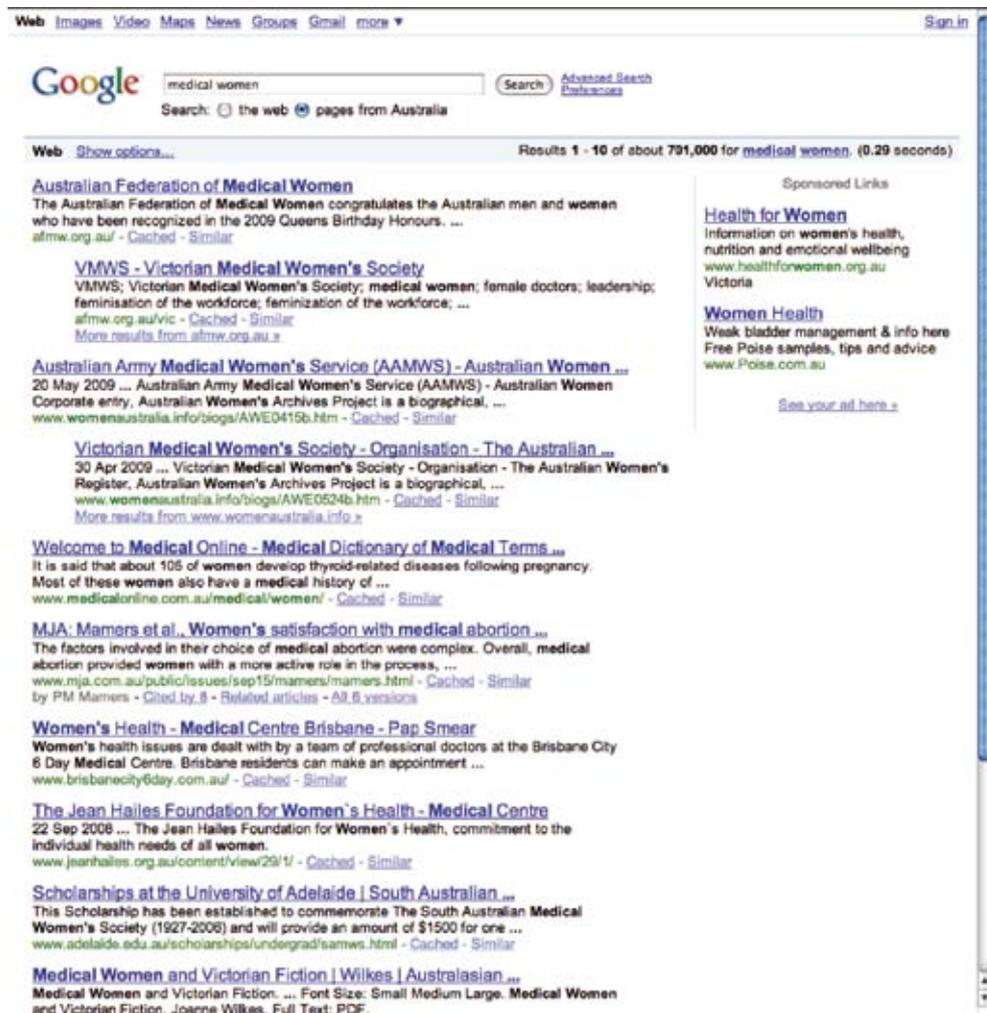
Above: AFMW website regularly ranks first or second on Google when searching with the keywords "medical women" (world pages).

The AFMW website now has a high profile, with rankings well in the top 10 on Google for the search term "medical women" for world-wide pages; indeed the page is regularly ranked first or second. For Australian pages, it's generally ranked first.

The site receives a high volume of website traffic through search engine referrals on terms including "women's health policy" and "effective communication". The latest figures show website traffic keeps growing, with the number of pages read up 597% from August 2008 to June 2009, a bandwidth increase of 862% and some 378 articles posted on the site to 30 June 2009.

The AFMW Website Management Guide has attracted enquiries from medical women — perceiving they would benefit from website-management skills training

and skill development — as well as a physician who is developing a website as part of a training programme and sought assistance in developing her website skills.



Below: AFMW website regularly ranks first on Google when searching with the keywords "medical women" on Australian-only pages.

Most Highly Viewed Articles

Website visitors most commonly view articles in the leadership category. Of those leadership articles, the 10 most popular posts viewed during the activity period were:

1. How To Negotiate: A Guide For Women In Medicine
2. Women As Medical Leadership – Opening Doors to Success
3. The Servant Leader
4. UNIFEM Young Women's Leadership Forum
5. Assertiveness Techniques

6. Open Collections Program – Women In Medicine
7. Stress Management Among Junior Doctors
8. Effective Communication
9. Situational Leadership
10. Maintaining a Work-Life Balance

News is the second most commonly viewed category, with the 10 most popular articles during the activity period being:

1. MWIA Western Pacific Regional Congress: Melbourne, October 2008
2. UNFPA State Of World Population Report 2008
3. Human Factors Engineering In Healthcare
4. Women Physicians And Family Medicine Monograph/ Literature Review 2008
5. MWIA Congress Report
6. AusAID Family Planning Guidelines
7. Developing A Women's Health Policy For Australia
8. The Impact of Violence On Young People And Their Relationships
9. The Waiting Room: The Story Of Dr Khulod Maarouf-Hassan
10. 16 Days Of Activism Against Gender Violence Campaign

Site statistics show that although the website is of particular interest to Australian internet users, it has attracted readers from all continents.

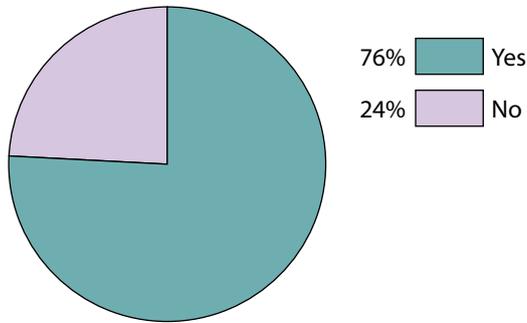


Above: *The geographical distribution of website visitors.*

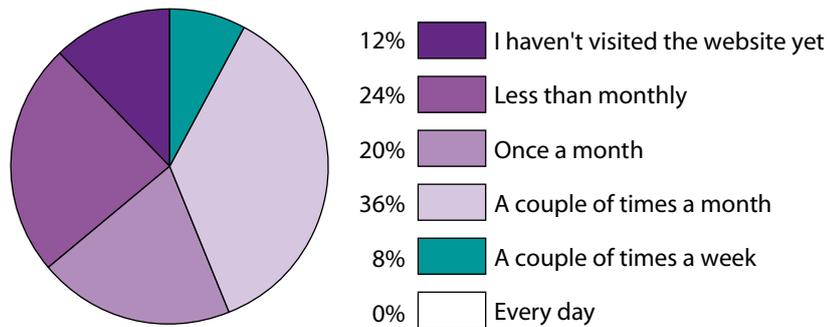
Member Survey on Redeveloped Website

AFMW conducted an electronic survey in May 2009 to gauge member reactions and the upgraded site's usefulness; it showed most members had seen the upgrade and used the site regularly. Some results are shown below:

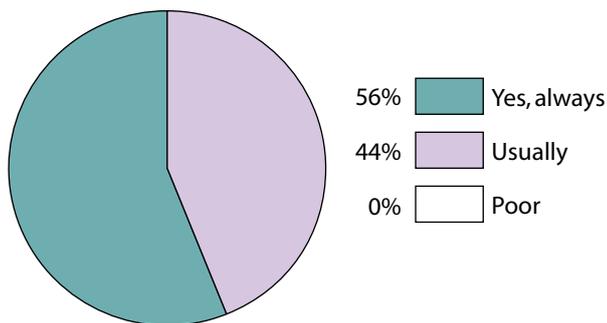
Are you aware that the AFMW website has been upgraded in recent months?



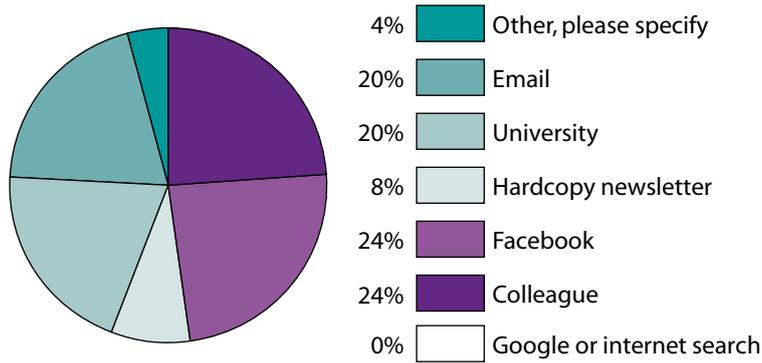
How often do you visit our site?



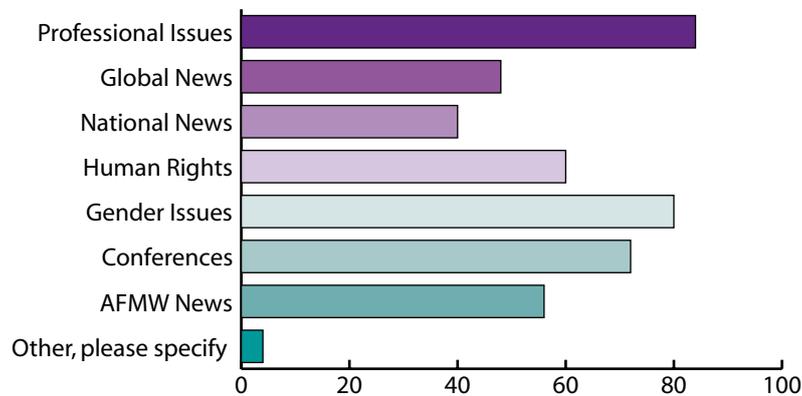
Do you find the website is easy to navigate, i.e. can you find what you are looking for in three clicks or less, or by using the search function on the home page?



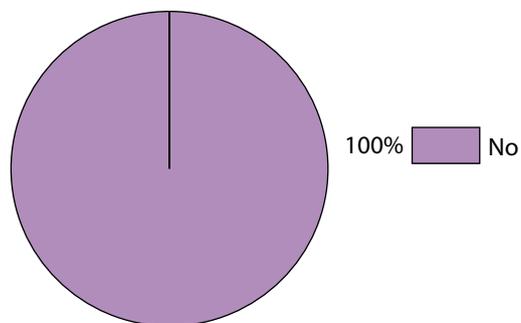
Where or how did you first learn about the Federation's website?



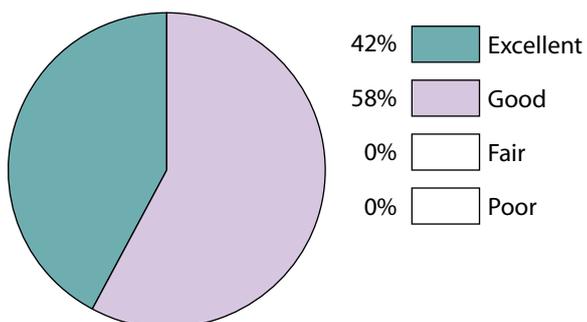
What sort of news articles are you interested in?



Have you experienced any technical difficulties when using the website?



Overall, are you happy with the upgraded website?



Qualitative responses included:

Reasons for visiting AFMW site:

- information for company newsletters
- interest
- papers and conference notices, information, resources
- updates, events, news

"I love visiting the AFMW site to stay updated on upcoming events, as well as some of the inspiring and interesting articles on the site. I enjoy checking out some of the links available on Women's Organisations to learn more about getting involved in representing women in the medical field and beyond."

We have established a leadership portal on the AFMW website with resources to empower medical women to undertake leadership roles. What resources do you find particularly useful?

- instructional information about skills required for leadership positions, such as chairing meetings, networking and enlisting organisational support
- support network: how to support other women, without undermining each other
- information on financial issues
- upcoming leadership seminars/scholarships
- suggestions for projects that members could be involved in and possibly take leadership of

Web 2.0 Strategies



Web 2.0 strategies are now used to great effect to build online networking and communication between medical women.

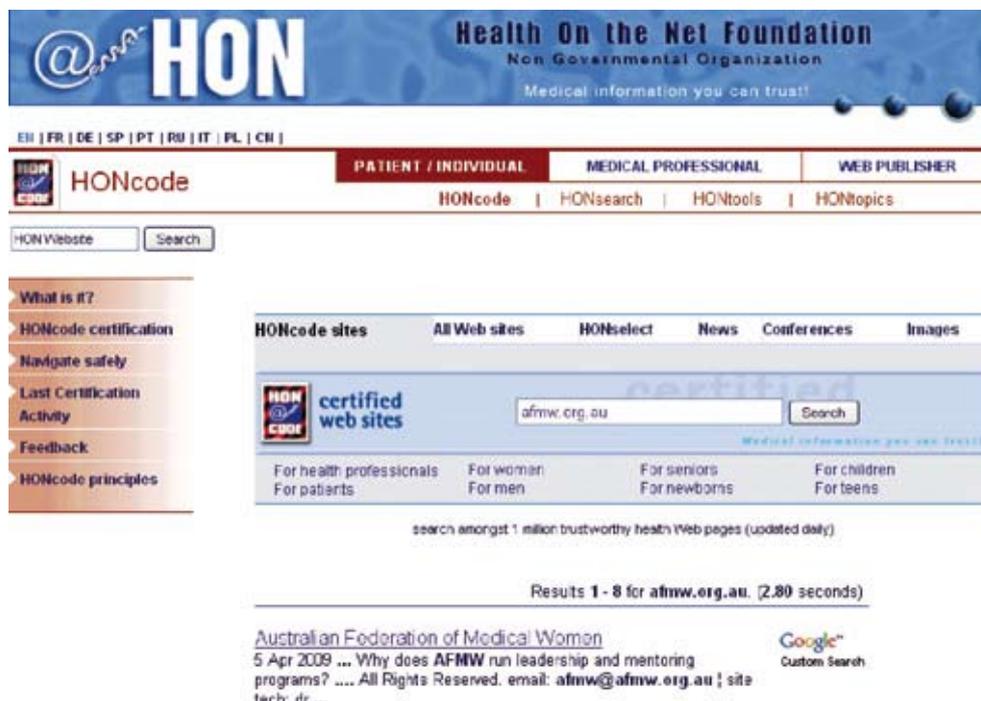
All of the state bodies, along with the federal body, are now registered on Facebook.

Health On The Net Foundation Accreditation

In March 2009, the AFMW website gained Health On The Net (HON) Foundation accreditation.

Created in 1995, HON is a non-profit, non-governmental organisation, accredited to the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations.

HON Foundation promotes and guides disseminating useful and reliable online health information, and its appropriate and efficient use.



Above: AFMW website listing at the Health On the Net Foundation website, <http://www.hon.ch>

E-Newsletter

In January 2009, AFMW published its first e-newsletter. This is now a regular quarterly publication that has been well received. (See Appendices D and E for excerpts from the first 2 issues.)

The newsletter improves communication within the AFMW and state medical women's societies, allowing leadership opportunities to be readily promoted, enhancing participation in project development and policy creation.

It also allows AFMW to readily tell members about the activities and issues it is pursuing, thus encourages increased participation.

While the e-newsletter initially attracted medical women as subscribers, a more latterly look shows that individuals in government and other Australian medical websites are now subscribing to receive the AFMW news.

Accessible Internet-Based Training

To train medical women in using web technologies, a practice website was developed (<http://test.afmw.org.au>), along with a training guide e-book spelling out how to use the practice site. Website-skills training sessions specifically designed for medical women were also held.

The test website is visible neither to the public nor to search engines, and was created purely so medical women could practice editing a test site before trying their skills on the real one.

The test site was created as an identical copy of the website in October 2008.

The instruction e-book written to accompany the test website guides medical women how to upload and edit content, including some aspects of using Joomla! (with references, and personal trainers listed for further learning).



Right: *AFMW practice website manual e-book written by medical women for medical women.*



Above: AFMW test website, <http://test.afmw.org.au>



Above: Medical women at a website-management skills training session.

Website Training Feedback

AFMW surveyed participants both before and after the website training.

The Pre-Website Workshop Questionnaire identified participants' experience and exposure to website-content management, while the post-workshop survey evaluated the training effectiveness.

Pleasingly, 88% of participants agreed and/or strongly agreed they felt informed about the objective of the workshop, with 100% of participants saying the workshop lived up to their expectations and that the content was relevant.

Regarding confidence with specific following tasks relating to the AFMW website, results were as follows:

TASK	PRE-EVALUATION	POST EVALUATION
<i>Log into the admin page</i>	38%	100%
<i>Create an article</i>	13%	100%
<i>Edit an article</i>	13%	100%
<i>Understand diff. module components (newsflash/banner)</i>	0%	63%
<i>Understand the differences between section - category and article</i>	13%	100%
<i>Create an article with an expiry date</i>	0%	25%
<i>Upload a document</i>	25%	100%
<i>Create a link to an uploaded document</i>	0%	100%
<i>Understand state menu</i>	13%	100%
<i>Understand AFMW menu</i>	50%	100%
<i>Understand blog layout, the use of 'read more' - 'page break' applications</i>	13%	100%
<i>Place image within an article</i>	25%	100%
<i>Manage formatting issues when pasting from Microsoft Word</i>	13%	88%

Results from the post-training evaluation will guide future training workshops.

Conclusion

Participants expressed high satisfaction levels in a web-based survey on the Australian Federation of Medical Women (AFMW) e-communication strategies, reflecting the interventions' appropriateness to the target group's needs.

Participants in the website-skills training and leadership-skills training — along with AFMW Leadership Scholarship recipients — also reported high satisfaction levels.

During the project's life, more than 1,000 medical women participated in the multifaceted "Bridging Leadership Barriers". However, the number of medical women benefiting continues to rise.

AFMW will sustain all of these strategies and outcomes beyond 2008-09. The redeveloped website is an integral component of AFMW's e-communication policy, which includes the quarterly AFMW e-newsletter developed as part of this project and available by free subscription to all medical women and stakeholders.

Ongoing technology training will be available through the practice website and instructional e-book that AFMW developed as part of the project.

Appendices

Appendix A: History Timeline

<i>Formation date</i>	<i>Medical Women's Society</i>
1896	<i>Victorian Medical Women's Society (VMWS)</i>
1919	<i>Medical Women's International Association (MWIA)</i>
1921	<i>Medical Women's Society of New South Wales (MWSNSW)</i>
1927	<i>Australian Federation of Medical Women (AFMW)</i>
1937	<i>Queensland Medical Women's Society (QMWS)</i>
1950+	<i>SA, WA, ACT, Tasmania Medical Women's Societies</i>
1995	<i>Supporting Women In Medicine (SWIM) student organisation, University of Queensland</i>

Appendix B: Medical Women's International Association

The Medical Women's International Association is the international umbrella for all the national medical women's societies.

MWIA's aims and goals are:

- to promote the co-operation of medical women in different countries and to develop friendship and understanding between medical women throughout the world
- to actively work against gender-related inequalities in the medical profession between female and male doctors including career opportunities and economical aspects
- to offer medical women the opportunity to meet, so as to confer upon questions concerning the health and well-being of humanity

The MWIA's website is <http://www.mwia.net>

(Members of the AFMW are automatically members of the MWIA.)

Appendix C: AFMW Executive & Committee

President: Dr Desiree Yap

Desiree is an Obstetrician and Gynaecologist with a Masters in Public Health and Tropical Medicine who has appointments at Monash Medical Centre and The Royal Women's Hospital. She is also currently working part-time in her East Melbourne private practice and has 2 young children. Before motherhood, Desiree travelled widely, working both in rural and remote Australia as well as overseas including with WHO. Desiree believes the medical women's societies spring from fine traditions, and that as one who has reaped the benefits of those who went before, in addition to having strong feelings about social justice, she feels a responsibility towards maintaining the organisation and fulfilling the organisation's aims.

Treasurer: Dr Sharon Tivey

Sharon is an Anaesthetist, working mainly in the public hospital system. Her undergraduate training was at The University of Sydney followed by postgraduate training in Sydney and Virginia, USA. She enjoys teaching and is a Conjoint Lecturer at the UNSW. She is keen to encourage RMOs in anaesthesia as a career, though she doesn't subscribe to the view "that it's a good job for a woman" Her "real world" interests were previously eating out, travel and so on, but are now racing around after a toddler and her big brother while dreaming of sleep, travel/eating out and so on. She has been involved with the Medical Women's Society of NSW since internship and has been the AFMW Treasurer for several years.

Vice President: Dr Jan Coles

Jan is an academic General Practitioner. She is a Senior Lecturer at Monash University Department of General Practice and the Gippsland Medical School. Her special interests are the teaching and learning of clinical skills, the impact of childhood sexual abuse on the lives of women — particularly early mothering, breastfeeding and touch — and occupational-based violence. In 2006 she was awarded the Vera Scantlebury Brown Research Fellowship in Maternal and Infant Health to further her research with young mothers who are survivors of childhood sexual assault. In 2007 she was awarded her PhD for her thesis "Breastfeeding and Maternal Touch after Childhood Sexual Assault".

Committee:

Dr Kate Duncan

Kate is an Obstetrician in private practice in Melbourne's south-east suburbs. Her interest in the Victorian Medical Women's Society (VMWS) dates back to early days as an intern, RMO and Registrar at the Queen Vic (where she believes they had wonderful mentors and role models). Kate is a committee member of both the VMWS and the AFMW. As an Australian Medical Association Board member, Kate worked at the state level on several issues, including efforts to resolve the medical indemnity crisis and the provider-number issue.

Associate Professor Deb Colville (National Co-ordinator)

Deb is a Melbourne Ophthalmologist who graduated from Monash in 1975 and is a Fellow of the College of Ophthalmologists and the College of Surgeons (1983). She has a small private practice in Ivanhoe, VIC. Deb was a Director of Ophthalmology at Austin Repatriation Medical Centre and recently retired from the College of Surgeons Council and as Chair of the RACS Women in Surgery Committee, a position she held for 9 years. Since 2000, she has been Director of Curriculum Development at the Royal Victorian Eye and Ear Hospital. Deb's Master of Public Health degree focused on educational programme evaluation in health care and she now researches curriculum and public health themes, including ophthalmic public health, gender and curriculum, and women in leadership in vocational education and training. She is interested in "doing leadership differently", developing ways of participation that "work for women" in the profession. Arising from the MWIA meeting in Sydney 2001, Deb taught medical students in Sweden and participated in curriculum development for MWIA with its executive, alongside gender experts from the WHO and UN, in Italy.

Dr Liz Rickman

Liz Rickman is a General Practitioner in inner city Sydney. After studying at UNSW, she entered the physician's training scheme, and then moved into general practice in a variety of locations, including working in remote Aboriginal communities as well as in urban centres. She has been active in the peace movement and women's movement, as well as the environmental movement. This has led to her working as a medic at sea with Greenpeace. She believes in the capacity of people to create a better world when they come together with shared aims.

Dr Gabrielle Casper

Dr Gabrielle Casper is a Sydney Gynaecologist with a special interest in women's health and human rights. She is Immediate Past President of both AFMW and the Medical Women's International Association (MWIA). She has represented MWIA at the World Health Organisation and United Nations meetings. Dr Casper received the 2004 Australian Medical Association (AMA) Women's Health Award and also the 2004 AMA Woman in Medicine Award. Dr Casper enjoys working as a Gynaecologist and cares for her patients with compassion and understanding while lobbying to improve women's health in Australia and overseas.

Appendix D: AFMW e-Newsletter January 2009 excerpt



Dear Medical Women,

President's report - Dr Desiree Yap

Happy 2009 and welcome to the inaugural AFMW e-newsletter! We plan for these updates to be quarterly and aim to keep you abreast of what is going on both for AFMA and MWIA, as well as disseminate information for States. Information, news, activities and web-articles will be presented succinctly - as we all have so much reading to get through these days... with links that can be followed if you wish to read more about the topic to hand.

At the fabulously successful [MWIA Western Pacific Congress held in October in Melbourne](#), AFMW changed Presidents. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Dr Susie Close, the outgoing President, for all her work. Susie has been very involved with [Womenspeak](#) in particular, and will be continuing to keep tabs there. [Read more...](#)

Join the AFMW Leadership Skills Database

AFMW encourages all Australian medical women to join the AFMW Leadership Skills Database, through which we aim to increase the strength of women's voices in public health policy development and service delivery. To read further details about the database please download the application form by clicking [here](#).

AFMW Leadership Portal

Many of you will have noticed the recent [AFMW website redevelopment](#) which has been achieved as part of the Bridging Leadership Barriers Project. As part of the redevelopment AFMW has launched an online Leadership Portal for medical women. For to access resources and essays on topics such as [mentoring](#), [negotiation](#), [writing for publications](#), [developing political savvy](#) and more visit the Leadership Portal [here](#).

Medical Women's International Association Western Pacific Regional Congress October 17-19, 2008

[Reports](#), abstracts, presentations, photos and [summaries](#) from the Congress are now online at the AFMW website. Registered users can access the abstracts and presentations through the MWIA page. If you are not yet a registered user you can register free online.

Developing a Women's Health Policy for Australia

The Australian Government has committed to developing a [National Women's Health Policy](#) which will emphasise prevention, health inequalities in our society, and the social determinants of those health inequalities. Community consultation will take place during 2009; if you are interested in taking part please join [the AFMW Leadership Skills Database](#) and stay tuned for more information!

AusAID Family Planning Guidelines

Did you know that across the world a mother dies every minute in childbirth or pregnancy related complications? Did you know that the [All Parliamentary Group on Population and Development](#) (PGDP) estimates that worldwide access to contraception and safe abortions would reduce maternal deaths by up to 35 per cent and child deaths by 20 per cent? Did you know that under the [AusAid Family Planning Guidelines](#) AusAID funded projects are banned from giving out even information about abortion, and no service can be provided, even when it might save the life of a woman? Even information about what not to do in terms of accessing unsafe abortion is banned. Only some forms of contraception can be funded with Australian aid money. Australia and the US are the only countries who have such guidelines. [Read more...](#)

National Management Guidelines for Sexually Transmissible Infections 7th Edition

The Sexual Health Society of Victoria has launched these Guidelines which are edited by Dr David Bradford and authored by Sexual Health Physicians from around Australia. For more information click [here](#).

Appendix E: AFMW e-Newsletter April 2009 excerpt



April 2009 e-Newsletter

UNIFEM Australia Young Women's Leadership Forum

Sydney May 22-24
[Click here](#)

April AFMW Survey Prizes!

Complete the [AFMW website survey](#) for a chance to receive one of 4 prestige prize packs valued at over \$300 each from [Jan Marini Skin Research](#)



Download the 2009 Surgical Pocket Mentor

[Click here](#) for a Pocket Mentor from the Association of Women Surgeons

Want to learn how to manage a website?

Email afmw@afmw.org.au for a copy of our training manual and access to our practice website

Join the AFMW Leadership Skills

AFMW President's Report

Welcome to the April 2009 AFMW e-Newsletter!

Life has been eventful since the last AFMW newsletter - in particular the devastating February 7th bushfires in Victoria. It seems that no Victorian has been untouched; our kinder teacher lost her house, but luckily not her life, in Strathewen (where 41 died). The generous support and offers of assistance that have come from across Australia following the tragedy have been greatly appreciated.

On a more positive note March saw the lifting of the AUSAid Guidelines which restricted family planning information and contraceptives within AUSAid funded programs. Details of this and many other items of interest are included in the links below.

AFMW is formulating resources to support each medical women's society and is keen to support the reconstitution of medical women's societies in inactive states. To this end each active state (Queensland, New South Wales, ACT and Victoria) is buddying an inactive state (Western Australia, South Australia, the Northern Territory and Tasmania). We will be providing support to medical women in establishing local groups and activities, not only through advice and mentoring but by providing the administrative tools required. To seek assistance for your state or to get involved please contact AFMW at afmw@afmw.org.au.

Consultation surrounding the new National Women's Health Policy is underway, with AFMW represented through the Australian Women's Coalition. The policy discussion paper launched March 12th aims to encourage discussions between the Government, key women's health groups, welfare groups and the Australian public on the make-up of a new National Women's Health policy. In developing the new policy, the Government is seeking submissions from roundtable participants and will encourage organisations such as health service providers or advocacy groups to make submissions. For more information [please click here](#).

These policy discussions and consultations are part of AFMW's *raison d'etre* and we are looking for volunteers to contribute by following the debates, writing letters and submissions and lobbying government. If the direction the Government is taking the 'Birthing Debate' is anything to go by, we have a responsibility to speak up and be involved, as otherwise important policies may be based

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AUSTRALIAN FEDERATION OF MEDICAL WOMEN

Appendix F: AFMW Leadership Portal

Australian Federation of Medical Women
the voice of Australian medical women

AFMW Home | About | Executive | **Leadership** | Links | Membership | MWIA | News | Projects | Publications | Conferences | Contact Us

State Societies
 ACT and Region >>>
 New South Wales >>>
 Northern Territory
 Queensland >>>
 South Australia
 Tasmania
 Victoria >>>
 Western Australia

Newsletter Signup
 Name:
 Email:
 National: SA TAS
 ACT VIC
 NSW WA
 QLD
 NT

Login
 Username:
 Password:
 Remember Me

 Forgot your password?
 Forgot your username?
 Create an account

Leadership
 Home > Leadership

15 Proven Strategies for Advancement
 Saturday, 13 June 2009 13:31
 Dr. Carol Gallagher's book *Going to the Top* details 15 proven strategies for advancement:
 1. Display leadership
 2. Don't take everything so personally
 3. Find your passion
 Read more...

Why does AFMW run leadership and mentoring programs?
 Saturday, 25 April 2009 13:29
 *Leadership and mentoring programs aim to increase women's skills and confidence to take on leadership roles, while introducing them to networks which may facilitate greater access to leadership positions in the workplace or on committees and councils.
 Read more...

Setting standards for responsible mentoring
 Saturday, 25 April 2009 13:17
 Mentoring Australia has a series of benchmarks developed for mentoring programs, to set standards for responsible mentoring. A responsible mentoring program requires:
 * A well-defined mission statement and established operating principles
 * Regular, consistent contact between mentor and mentee
 * Establishment under the auspices of a recognised organisation
 Read more...

Our uncertain future requires new leadership
 Saturday, 21 February 2009 18:32
 Our uncertain future requires new leadership - can the origins and theories of this ancient construct illuminate its capacity to change?
 Seemingly teetering on the boundaries of stability and familiarity, today's societies seem in great need of leadership; leadership which is insightful and courageous. But is leadership a construct flexible to change? And what are the contributors to the formation of a leader? For us to appraise and elect leaders who will encourage humanity towards a sustainable and fair global society, we need to understand the relative contributions of personal character and externalities to the development of a leader. Furthermore, achieving a sustainable future may necessitate a change in leadership style. Examining the evolution of leadership may help us elucidate the potential for such a change.
 Last Updated on Saturday, 21 February 2009 18:36
 Read more...

Medical Women and Leadership
 Thursday, 13 November 2008 00:00
 - a perspective of a final year medical student
 According to Wikipedia, the knowledge base of the 21st century, leadership can refer to "those entities that perform one or more acts of leading, the ability to affect human

search...

A leader takes people where they want to go. A great leader takes people where they don't necessarily want to go, but ought to be. - Rosalynn Carter

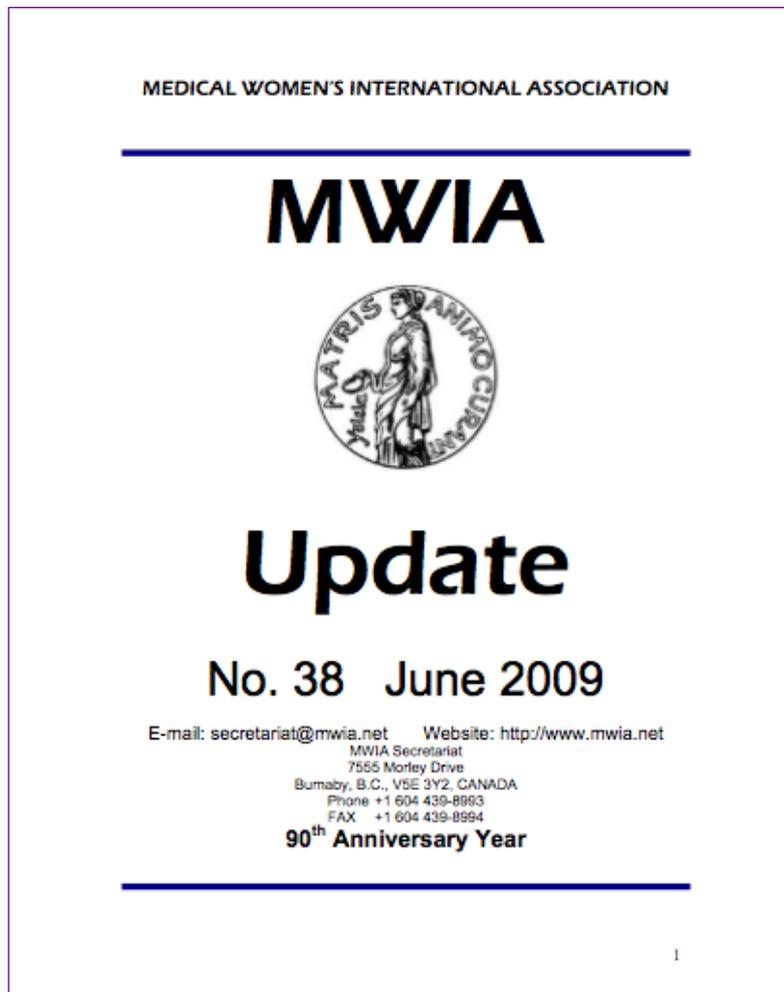
Newsflash
 sign the GEAR Campaign petition to build a United Nations where women's own voices can be heard, at all levels of society, and in the decisions that affect their lives

HONcode This site complies to the HONcode standard for trustworthy health information: verify here.

Join the AFMW LEADERSHIP SKILLS DATABASE

now on facebook

Emotional health THE CONSPIRACY OF SILENCE among Medical Practitioners



Appendix H: What is Joomla!?

Joomla! is an open-source, content management system (CMS) that enables web sites and powerful online applications to be built. Freely available to everyone, its ease-of-use and extensibility, among many other aspects, have made the award-winning Joomla! among the most popular web site software available.



The Joomla! Project is volunteer based, with contributors from all over the world working in many different capacities. The core team leads the project, being responsible for its overall management, with support from the various working groups and community at large. The core team's commitment is to move Joomla! forward in the true spirit of the open-source movement. Team members come from different backgrounds, a diverse array of disciplines, varied experiences and many countries — contributing to the project's strength and richness.

What is a CMS?

A CMS system is software that keeps track of every piece of content on a web site (similarly to how a public library keeps track of books and stores them). Content can be simple text, photos, music, video, documents and so on. A major advantage of using a CMS is that it requires almost no technical skill or knowledge to manage.

Some examples of what Joomla! does:

- Joomla! corporate web sites or portals
- corporate intranets and extranets
- online magazines, newspapers, and publications
- e-commerce and online reservations
- government applications
- small business web sites
- non-profit and organisational web sites
- community-based portals
- school and church web sites
- personal or family homepages

Some examples of those using Joomla!

- MTV Networks Quizilla (Social networking) - <http://www.quizilla.com>
- IHOP (Restaurant chain) - <http://www.ihop.com>
- Harvard University (Educational) - <http://gsas.harvard.edu>
- Citibank (Financial institution intranet) - Not publicly accessible
- The Green Maven (Eco-resources) - <http://www.greenmaven.com>
- Outdoor Photographer (Magazine) - <http://www.outdoorphotographer.com>
- PlayShakespeare.com (Cultural) - <http://www.playshakespeare.com>
- Senso Interiors (Furniture design) - <http://www.sensointeriors.co.za>

The vision of Joomla! includes:

- people publishing and collaborating in their communities and around the world
- software that is free, secure and high-quality
- a project that is socially responsible

Source: <http://www.joomla.org>