

THE NAMS MENTORSHIP PROGRAM

Sea to sea: Manson-Shufelt, mentor-mentee in The North American Menopause Society Mentorship Program

Despite the many miles between them, one on the east coast and one on the west coast, Drs. JoAnn Manson and Chrisandra Shufelt have established a mutually effective and productive North American Menopause Society (NAMS) mentor-mentee relationship. The first class of six mentors and six mentees in the NAMS Mentorship Program began in 2009. This article represents the second in my series of interviews with the six mentor-mentee pairs in that class.



Chrisandra L. Shufelt, MD, MS, is the Assistant Director of the Women's Heart Center in the Cedars-Sinai Heart Institute and an Assistant Clinical Professor of Medicine in the University of California, Los Angeles, David Geffen School of Medicine. The Women's Heart Center was established to provide preventive care for women at risk for heart

disease through state-of-the-art screening and diagnostic testing.

Chrisandra, born in Wales, is a graduate of the University of California, Irvine, and the Keck School of Medicine at the University of Southern California. Before medical school, she obtained a master's degree in epidemiology and biostatistics from the University of Southern California. After her residency in internal medicine, Chrisandra, always interested in women's health, completed a fellowship in Women's Heart Disease and Health at Cedars-Sinai Medical Center, a program directed by Dr. C. Noel Bairey Merz, a noted clinician and investigator in the field of preventive cardiology. After her fellowship, Chrisandra was invited to remain on staff as a faculty member to be the principal clinician in the Women's Heart Center. Chrisandra specifically developed a clinic in the Women's Heart Center, called the Advanced Preventive Women's Clinic, for women with or at risk for heart disease who are also experiencing menopausal symptoms. In this clinic, high priority is given to a consideration of menopausal symptoms, including hormonal and nonhormonal treatment.

Chrisandra devotes 50% of her time to clinical activities, caring for high-risk patients in the Women's Heart Center who are referred by clinicians in various disciplines, including medical endocrinology, obstetric-gynecology, and primary care. She was pleased to tell me that a significant number of her referrals come from the NAMS Web site. The rest of her time is devoted to research activities, teaching, and lecturing, focusing on the interaction between hormones and heart disease. In her spare time, Chrisandra volunteers on the

Medical Advisory Board of the Downtown Women's Center, a clinic for homeless women in Los Angeles.

Chrisandra is interested in assessing the role of estrogen during the perimenopausal years in influencing the risk and development of heart disease and is currently applying for National Institutes of Health support focusing on cardiovascular disease. Looking to the future, Chrisandra is expecting a "new revolution" in the treatment of menopausal symptoms, a change that includes lower hormone doses and new nonhormonal options. She believes that new alternatives will be the result of a better understanding of pathophysiology, such as the unraveling of the mechanisms involved in vasomotor symptoms.

Chrisandra, with a great sense of appreciation, is pleased to heap superlatives on the NAMS program. "The NAMS Mentorship Program is beyond my expectations; I hit the mentor jackpot with JoAnn Manson. Through her mentorship, I have learned a tremendous amount about hormones and cardiovascular disease. She is extremely accessible by phone and e-mails. I am amazed by her quickness in responding to my e-mails." "She leads me down the pathway and lets me know what to do, but she just leads me down far enough, to then let me do it on my own." Chrisandra and JoAnn have prepared data on cardiovascular disease from the Women's Health Initiative observational study (including estrogen doses, different formulations, and route of delivery), yielding an abstract for the next NAMS meeting and, ultimately, a paper for publication.

Chrisandra is a NAMS-certified menopause practitioner who enthusiastically expresses her high regard for NAMS. She is impressed with the high priority given to promoting and helping young investigators and fostering new members in a user-friendly atmosphere that is far from intimidating. She is thoroughly pleased with the NAMS Mentorship Program and views it as an important mechanism for the development of future leaders in NAMS.

At the other end of the country, in Boston, JoAnn E. Manson, MD, DrPH, is Professor of Medicine and the Elizabeth Fay Brigham Professor of Women's Health at the Harvard Medical School. She is also the Chief of the Division of Preventive Medicine and Codirector of the Connors Center for Women's Health and Gender Biology at Brigham and Women's Hospital. JoAnn loves mentoring and introducing young people to new



resources and potential collaborators. She sees mentoring as opening doors, and a good example is her providing access for Chrisandra to the Women's Health Initiative database. She is very pleased to be working with a mentee as dedicated and capable as Chrisandra. With a laugh, JoAnn said, "I consider mentoring to be one of the privileges of entering the ranks of senior faculty."

After a year in the program, JoAnn is delighted with the process and outcome, but she cautions that time goes too quickly. She cautions those who are thinking of the NAMS Mentorship Program to formulate realistic thoughts and plans as soon as possible. She raises a point for NAMS to consider: perhaps there should be more flexibility in the first year and more time for program development. She further recommends that mentors should focus on learning and understanding the specific objectives of a mentee and assist in maintaining a consistency with long-term goals.

The experiences of the mentor-mentee pairs I have interviewed thus far have been unabashedly positive. The mentors

are finding gratification in the assistance of young people who have a committed interest in menopause and postmenopausal health, and they are uplifted by the possibility of long-term relationships with these dedicated people. JoAnn emphasized to me a major benefit of the NAMS program, the stimulation of collaborations that might not otherwise have occurred and the expansion of the network of individuals who communicate and exchange ideas with each other. The mentees are grateful for new opportunities and the guidance derived from experienced and, yes, wise advisors. I hope this series of interviews will provide stimulating motivation that will lead to new candidates for the NAMS Mentorship Program.

Financial disclosure/conflicts of interest: None reported.

Leon Speroff, MD
Professor Emeritus of Obstetrics and Gynecology
Oregon Health and Science University
Portland, Oregon