

## Empowering Women Surgeons: Women in Surgery Lecture on March 24

March 22, 2011 |

In order to support professional development of women surgeons and raise gender awareness, the UC San Diego Department of Surgery is offering a free educational series for surgeons, medical students, and the general public. The lecture, “Think big: Harnessing subtle signs and signals of power to gain power” will take place on Thursday, March 24 at 6 p.m. at UCSD Moores Cancer Center’s Goldberg Auditorium.

The lecture – part of an educational series called “Women in Surgery” – will offer a timely perspective on how women can feel more powerful in the workplace and advance their careers, particularly in the field of medicine and surgery. The lecture is aimed mainly at female surgeons, but women in other professions may also find it useful.

Guest lecturer Pamela Smith, PhD - assistant professor of management and strategy at UCSD Rady School of Management and a member UCSD Center for Research on Gender in the Professions – is a social psychologist who studies how social power affects cognition, motivation, and interpersonal behavior. She is interested in how particular behaviors and cognitive styles are perceived as signs of power. Smith will share the latest findings on techniques that can help women feel more powerful about themselves and, importantly, be perceived as more powerful by others.

“Even though women surgeons are generally seen as strong personalities, gaining power in their workplace might still be a challenge, as they are a pioneering minority in what is traditionally a man’s world,” said Smith.

More women are choosing to pursue a career in surgery, but they still face challenges on both local and national levels, according to Sonia Ramamoorthy, MD, associate professor of surgery at the UCSD School of Medicine. She added that while women make up about 12 percent of the country’s 26,000 actively practicing general surgeons, they rarely get promoted to leadership positions.

“Some of the reasons for this under-representation are beyond our control, as they call for large-scale institutional changes and paradigm shifts,” said Ramamoorthy. “But there are also ways in

which women can take a proactive approach in order to significantly enhance their career development and increase chances to get promoted.”

To pave the way for successful and fulfilling careers as surgeons, women have to master their medical knowledge, but also overcome many psychological barriers and extend their soft-skills set. “Women surgeons are talented advocates for their patients and departments. However, they tend to be less successful at advocating for their own professional needs,” said Ramamoorthy.

Previous “Women in Surgery” events attracted a large audience of surgical residents, faculty members and students. Positive feedback inspired Ramamoorthy to set a new goal: to reach out to men as well as women in the surgical and medical professions.

“With women comprising almost half of medical students today, men will be collaborating with women more often, mentoring them or working under their leadership. Resolving gender issues in the fields of medicine and surgery can only happen if everyone involved speaks a common language,” she said.

To RSVP for the March 24 lecture, call Christina Castillo at (858)822-6277 or email [ccastillo@ucsd.edu](mailto:ccastillo@ucsd.edu)

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