

Board Member Spotlight:

Thomas Gellhaus, MD



Dr. Thomas Gellhaus, the recently appointed Division Director for General Obstetrics and Gynecology, brings to the Department a wealth of clinical experience and passions for teaching, advocacy, and providing care to patients in the developing world.

After a 20-year career in private practice in the Quad Cities area, Dr. Gellhaus joined the faculty at the University of Iowa in the summer of 2010 as a

Clinical Associate Professor. He made this career transition in large part because teaching is a major passion of his, particularly the opportunity to pass along the knowledge he has gained over the years as a practicing obstetrician and gynecologist. Currently Dr. Gellhaus spends a majority of his time teaching students and residents in addition to his new role as the Division Director. As a testament to his commitment to educating the next generation of physicians, Dr. Gellhaus received the Medical Student Teaching Award in July 2011, a significant honor he was bestowed with in his first year at Iowa.

In addition to his clinical practice, Dr. Gellhaus has been involved in advocacy for women's health care since 1995 through the American College of Obstetrics and Gynecology (now American Congress of Obstetrics and Gynecology/ACOG). To gain a better appreciation for advocacy, he participated in the McCain Fellowship in OBGYN program in 1999, which entailed spending one month in Washington, D.C., working with the ACOG government relations and advocacy department. In this fellowship, he gained valuable knowledge regarding how to effectively lobby Congress in the interest of women's health care. He also became well-versed in the inner workings of Congress.

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Dr. Gellhaus also completed a Primary Care Policy Fellowship with the Department of Health and Human Services in 2001 in Washington, D.C. This fellowship was an opportunity to learn how to research and develop health care policy. At the culmination of the fellowship, the group composed their policy statement and presented it to Tommy Thompson, who was then the Secretary of Health and Human Services. Dr. Gellhaus currently serves as the ACOG National Assistant Secretary, which is part of executive board for ACOG. He was recently re-elected for another term as the National Assistant Secretary. He is also an active member of the ACOG Government and Advocacy Division, which trains participants ranging from private and academic physicians to residents, with the goal of becoming lobbyists for Congress and, importantly, applying their knowledge in their practices at home.

As an extension of his passion for patient advocacy, Dr. Gellhaus funds the Gellhaus Resident Advocacy Fellowship, an annual program in which 1-3 fourth-year residents spend a month in Washington, D.C., to learn about lobbying for women's health issues. According to Dr. Gellhaus, "If you're not at the table, you'll be on the menu. If we aren't advocating for women's health care, others will happily make those choices for us." In recognition of his tireless efforts in advocacy for women's health, the Honorable Bruce L. Braley read a statement in the Proceedings and Debates of the 112th Congress, First Session, House of Representatives, January 26, 2011. The title of the statement was, "Honoring Dr. Thomas M. Gellhaus' lifelong dedication

to women's health at home and around the globe."

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Another facet of Dr. Gellhaus' commitment to patient care is exemplified by his outreach efforts. Since 1996, Dr. Gellhaus has organized a program each summer to provide gynecologic and obstetrical surgical services to patients in Bolivia and other developing countries. Collectively, these efforts have culminated in over 1800 surgeries, 50,000 prescriptions, and close to 10,000 patients have been seen. Future plans include implementing a sustainable site in Bolivia and an infrastructure that improves care of patients in the developing world.

A Midwest native, Dr. Gellhaus completed his undergraduate degree at Augustana College in Sioux Falls, SD. After he received an MD at the University of Oklahoma in Oklahoma City, OK, he entered a pathology residency at the University of South Dakota in Sioux Falls. He later completed a residency in obstetrics and gynecology at the University of Iowa. Dr. Gellhaus has a self-described "family of medicine" – his wife is a public health nurse in Bettendorf, one daughter is a marriage and family therapist in Ames, another daughter is a family physician in Albuquerque, NM, and his son is a resident in urology at Indiana University.

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