

Board Member Spotlight:

Marygrace Elson, MD, MME



Marygrace Elson, MD, MME, joins us as guest editor for this issue of *Proceedings in Obstetrics and Gynecology*, which is focused on topics related to education. Dr. Elson is the Vice-Chair for Education, Residency Program Director, and Clinical Professor, Dr. William C. Keettel Chair of Obstetrics and Gynecology (OBGYN) in the Department of OBGYN at the University of Iowa. Here we provide a profile of Dr. Elson and her current educational endeavors at the University of Iowa.

A defining characteristic of Dr. Elson is her passion for education and training tomorrow's caregivers. This drive to better educate trainees is drawn from her deep concern about the quality of care available to women. She aims to create a setting of informed care in which women can partner with their providers regarding health care decisions. As a testament to her commitment to improve trainee education, she completed the Teaching Scholars Program, which is sponsored by the Office of Consultation and Research in Medical Education in the Carver College of Medicine at the University of Iowa. She subsequently went on to complete a Master of Medical Education Degree from the Carver College of Medicine.

*"In order to take care of others,
we must first take care of
ourselves."*

Dr. Marygrace Elson

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Dr. Elson's previous administrative role in the department was as the Division Director of General Obstetrics and Gynecology from 2001-2011. During her tenure as Division Director, Dr. Elson recruited many new faculty members of the Division. A source of accomplishment for her was encouraging the variety of clinical interests in the Division. She also observed the impact that great educators have on the professional growth of trainees. From 2007-2010, Dr. Elson served as the medical student clinical clerkship director. Dr. Elson then expanded upon her interest in fostering the careers of trainees by taking the reins as the Residency Program Director in December 2010.

Dr. Elson's own career path began as a chemistry major at Vassar College. She then completed medical school at the University of Illinois College of Medicine and residency in obstetrics and gynecology at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. While in residency, an important presence in her early development as a physician was Dr. Delores Büchler, a professor at a time when few women were in high rank positions in academic medicine. Following residency, Dr. Elson joined the faculty at the University of Wisconsin Gynecology Division for two years, with a special focus on colposcopy and laser surgery. Dr. Elson then transitioned to private practice in Chico, California, with the Chico Medical Group. After two years, she returned to the Midwest to

the Ellyn Clinic, a large multispecialty group in Chicago, where she stayed for 10 years.

Drawing upon her years of experience in private practice, Dr. Elson recognized that she had skills to pass along to trainees and, in 2000, she returned to academia as a generalist at the University of Iowa Department of OBGYN. Dr. Joseph Nigro, a senior partner at the Ellyn Clinic, was a key figure during this transition time in her career, and Dr. Frank Zlatnik was instrumental in her recruitment to Iowa. Ironically enough, this was not Dr. Elson's first experience at the University of Iowa. As a resident, she had participated in a "football exchange" weekend, where she met many of the faculty in OBGYN. Throughout her tenure at the University of Iowa, former Department Chair Dr. Jennifer Niebyl has also been another of Dr. Elson's mentors, always encouraging Dr. Elson to "go for it".

Dr. Elson strongly believes that engaging in hobbies makes her more effective in a professional capacity. Her goal for her trainees is to foster a balance between keeping up with hobbies and self-care. According to Dr. Elson, "In order to take care others, we must first take care of ourselves."

Written by Kristina W. Thiel, Ph.D.
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