Our History

The Deborah E. Powell Center for Women’s Health was established in 2003 when the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services awarded the University of Minnesota the designation as a National Center of Excellence in Women’s Health. Our center is an engaged group of University faculty, researchers, health care providers, students, and community partners who share a dedication to women’s health. As a National Center of Excellence, we are a recognized leader in the field of women’s health and serve as a catalyst for improving the health of women in Minnesota and beyond. In 2005, our center adopted the name of Deborah E. Powell, in honor of the current dean of the University of Minnesota Medical School and the first woman to hold this position.
Centro Campesino is dedicated to improving the lives of migrant, agricultural workers, and rural Latinos. A grassroots organization based in Owatonna, Minnesota, Centro Campesino requested collaboration with the Powell Center to conduct a survey assessing the mental health needs of their community. In response, the Powell Center developed a research team with the School of Nursing and has worked with Centro Campesino to develop a culturally specific, Latino mental health survey. Centro Campesino staff is currently administering the survey to 200 Latino youth and adults in south-central Minnesota. The results will guide Centro Campesino’s plans to increase local mental health resources for Latino women and families.
A primary goal of the Powell Center is to increase University research in women’s health and disseminate research findings to benefit all women.

- **Women’s Health Research Conferences**: In 2004, we organized Minnesota’s first interdisciplinary Women’s Health Research Conference. Since then, our annual conference attendance has tripled to over 300 participants in 2006. The day-long conference connects University and community members with presentations from local and national experts and awards for excellence in women’s health research.

- **Supporting new women’s health research**: The Powell Center has convened the University’s first Women’s Health Research Advisory Committee with representatives from across the University including Medicine, Nursing, Pharmacy, Public Health, and Psychology. The Powell Center leads research grant submissions and disseminates funding opportunities to researchers.

- **Encouraging women’s participation in clinical research**: We believe that participation of diverse women in clinical research, studies conducted in clinics or hospitals, is crucial to improve our knowledge of women’s health. Through our newsletter, Web site, and community outreach activities, we disseminate information to diverse communities about enrolling in current women’s health research studies.

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**Promoting Women Leaders**

Women’s leadership is a key component to improving women’s health. The Powell Center supports current and future women health leaders by

- **Developing mentoring resources**: such as the book “Mentoring and Being Mentored: Effective Collaboration throughout an Academic Career,” part of a comprehensive University mentoring program (Bland, Taylor, Shollenberg, Mulcahy).

- **Providing guidance to women** of all ages who are interested in health careers and pairing junior and senior researchers who share an interest in women’s health.

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**She who has health has hope; and she who has hope has everything.**

~Arabian Proverb
Red Dress Event 2004

The red dress is the national symbol to raise awareness of women and heart disease. In August 2004, the Powell Center partnered with over 25 community organizations from across Minnesota to educate diverse women about cardiovascular health risks. The event included workshops for health care providers and community leaders, as well as free health screenings and education for over 500 women at the Mall of America. The event culminated in a multicultural Red Dress Fashion Show sponsored by Macy’s and featuring Powell Center leaders, community members, and state legislators as models.

Focus on Women and Heart Health: Heart Disease does not care what you wear!

The mission of our Heart Truth Dissemination project is to get the word out to health providers that heart disease is the number one killer of women. The Powell Center was awarded a competitive federal grant to provide education throughout the state, as well as to several community health organizations in Vermont and Delaware. We have provided heart education to over 1000 health care providers through 22 lectures offered to date.