

VCU School of Medicine

WISDM Professional Achievement Award

Ellen L. Brock, M.D., M.P.H.



Quietly influential. A skilled medical professional who changes the lives of both her patients and those she has mentored. Ellen L. Brock, MD, MPH, Associate Professor, Obstetrics & Gynecology, epitomizes what the WISDM Professional Achievement Award signifies.

"I could not have asked for a better role model." wrote Marie Menke, MD, MPH, an assistant professor in Ob-Gyn. "She...inspires me to strive for excellence in all that I do and has proven to be personally committed to my professional growth and development," agreed Chief Resident Makeba Williams, MD, "She has a way of identifying and developing the individual talent, skills and abilities of the residents."

Among the gifts she shares with those who are mentored by her and who work beside her is her ability to quietly and confidently deliver superior medical care - whether at VCU Medical Center or providing care, as a volunteer, to women in rural Thailand or Swaziland.

In addition to her responsibilities as the Section Head in General Obstetrics and Gynecology, Dr. Brock recently created a year-long didactic/simulation training course for residents, teaching them minimally invasive surgery, primarily laparoscopic surgery. "Her passion for laparoscopy and its utility in the better treatment of common gynecologic problems is exciting for those that train under her," Dr. Williams added. "She has infused new energy into our resident education series by developing cutting edge techniques for teaching minimally invasive surgery."

Dr. Brock also has just been named the first Medical Director of the Center for Human Simulation and Patient Safety for the VCU School of Medicine. This position will include training for students, residents, fellows, practitioners, and hospital staff. According to a colleague, this appointment "reflects her continued efforts to improve care as well as her desire to constantly challenge herself."

"Probably the most telling tribute to her capabilities is the fact that numerous professional colleagues have chosen her as their primary physician," one colleague wrote. "Dr. Brock is a surgeon with an outstanding reputation," added Leo J. Dunn Distinguished Professor and Chair John W. Seeds, MD. He added that she also "is a teacher of rare quality. She can cut to the heart of an issue in a nanosecond and teach the student or resident the essence with clarity and compassion."

Her quest to constantly increase her skills base and expertise and then to use those skills to help others is legendary. While maintaining her full-time medical career and academic medical responsibilities, she obtained her Master's in Public Health degree in 1997, and then took her combined medical and public health knowledge to improve the conditions of those in serious need in places such as Vladivostok and Azerbaijan. She is equally committed to her non-medical activities, including serving on the Board and as former Chair of both the American Shakespeare Center in Staunton and the Virginia League for Planned Parenthood, and engaging her passion in gourmet cooking.

"Ellen is a renaissance woman in that she balances her accomplished professional life with several outside passions, which she pursues with the same degree of depth and vigor that she does medicine," added one of her mentees, Carolyn Matthews, MD. Her ability to excel as a physician, leader and mentor, as well as make time for her friends and family, the greater community and herself is a source of awe and inspiration to those around her.

A moniker given to her by a recent residency class neatly summarizes why Dr. Brock so richly deserves this year's WISDM award. In recognition of her excellence as a physician, surgeon, educator and mentor, her nickname was simply this: "The Gold Standard."