

## WOMEN'S MICROSURGERY GROUP

## Building a Great Foundation



**Julie E. Park,  
MD, FACS**

Women's Microsurgery  
Group Chair

The Women's Microsurgery Group (WMG) held its inaugural reception on Saturday, January 11th in Kauai. It was a great success with 43 attendees that included medical students, residents, fellows, and attendings. We also introduced the first WMG ViOptix Travel Fellowship. Sixty seven outstanding women applied this year. It is exciting to know that there are so many women medical students, residents and fellows interested in pursuing microsurgery. It is our hope that the WMG can help foster this interest as these women complete their training and ultimately join us as members of ASRM.



Left to right: ViOptix representative Kristi Data, WMG Scholarship Winner MarQuita Kilgore, WMG Committee Chair Julie E. Park, MD

This year's WMG ViOptix Travel Fellowship recipient was MarQuita Kilgore. MarQuita graduated *summa cum laude* from Emory with a joint degree in anthropology and human biology. She is now a second year medical student at Yale University School of Medicine and has an interest in global health. At right is an essay from MarQuita about her experiences at ASRM. **RM**

My experience as the inaugural Women's Microsurgery Group ViOptix Travel Scholarship recipient has proved to be life-changing and awe-inspiring. On my way to the ASRM annual meeting, I left New Haven as a second-year medical student, stressed and mostly consumed with preparation for my upcoming USMLE Step 1. Amazingly, I left Lihue with an entirely refreshed outlook on my journey through medical training. Please allow me to share the details behind this transformation, as it transcends not only my interest in microsurgery, but also my sense of career development in general.

The most eye-opening lesson I learned during my time at the meeting was the power of professional networking. Of course, as students, we all hear and realize on some level that networking is important. However, through interacting with and learning from others at the meeting, I felt that I finally truly understood its undeniable value.

I witnessed several fourth year medical students that are applying into plastic surgery residencies call upon the national connections that they made through away rotations and by proactively engaging the field. In the Young Microsurgeons Lunch Forum entitled, "Starting a Microsurgical Practice: Lessons Learned and Tips for Success," the speakers emphasized the importance of longterm relationships and reputation in building a referral base. It

was evident that many of the microsurgery colleagues catching up or traveling together at the conference were actually good friends, rather than just co-workers. Furthermore, the Women's Microsurgery Group Reception allowed me to experience the strong connections that have been forged between women in microsurgery. Rather than shying away from my very apparent lack of connections in the microsurgery world, I set the goal to likewise invest in relationships, especially at this early stage in my career, emphasizing mentorship and accountability as I grow in my training.

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WMG *Continued*

Given my interests in the intersection of surgery, public/global health, and healthcare management, I have struggled with finding a career niche that suits such diverse interests, but the meeting gave me hope! The session on Outcomes Assessment in the Era of Quality Improvement and Cost Containment exposed me to surgeons engaging phenomenal challenges related to both public health and healthcare management. Surgery has historically been neglected in the realm of public health, but as quality of care and outcomes-based payment become the model for healthcare systems, the issues of health services outcomes, quality improvement, safety, and finances become increasingly relevant to modern-day surgeons. It was awe-inspiring to meet surgeons who were also passionate about addressing such issues. They thoroughly defined the concept of “quality” in the context of plastic surgery. I enjoyed their perspectives on how quality-based medicare payments, hospital ratings, and safety measures will affect microsurgery and other surgical fields. Living vicariously through their experiences, I mentally constructed the foundations of my dream career, on which I intend to continue building.

Attending the conference gave me the opportunity to experience and be inspired by the ingenuity that encompasses microsurgery. I learned more than I ever imagined I would learn in the few days that I was there! When case descriptions were over my head, which was rather frequent, I inquired my way to at least a basic understanding. The fact that I was continuously engaged and excited by the clinical and surgical masterpieces



*The first Women's Microsurgery Group Reception*

further encouraged me to continue exploring the possibility of a career in microsurgery. The “Best Case/Best Save Competitive” was an action-packed experience that gave me a wonderful glimpse into the skill, general attitudes, and passion of the microsurgery community. I interacted with many researchers and innovators who further exemplified these traits. I learned about several different career paths through which various meeting attendees had entered microsurgery, which gave me several clerkship options to consider in planning my third and fourth years of medical school. The beautiful surgical transformations and astoundingly brilliant innovations in microsurgery inspired me to continue pushing and working hard now to better prepare myself to take part in similarly grand opportunities in the future.

I extend my deepest gratitude to ViOptix and the ASRM Women's Microsurgery Group for affording me exposure to such excellent career lessons and sources of inspiration through my attendance at the ASRM 2014 Annual Meeting. Thank you.

Sincerely,

MarQuita Kilgore  
M.D. Candidate, Yale School of  
Medicine Class of 2016