AMWA Announces Recipients of the 2026 INSPIRE Award

AMWA honors 31 women physicians with the 2026 INSPIRE Award for leadership, mentorship, patient care, advocacy, and service.



2026 AMWA INSPIRE Award Winners

NY, UNITED STATES, September 23, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The American Medical Women's Association (AMWA) is honored to announce 31 recipients of the 2026 AMWA INSPIRE Award. This annual award celebrates women physicians who exemplify the highest values of vision, integrity, service, and role modeling in medicine and health care.

"The INSPIRE Award, given in September, during Women in Medicine Month, was established by the AMWA Leadership Council to honor women physicians who inspire others because of their commitment to excellence in caring for patients, mentorship, leadership, community service, and/or advocacy work," says Dr. Connie Newman, MD, a Past President of AMWA and founding member of the AMWA Leadership Council. "The 2026 Honorees are truly dedicated physicians, and we are grateful to them for their many contributions to health care."

These accomplished women in medicine reflect a wide array of clinical specialties and a variety of settings from large academic centers and highly specialized centers of excellence to community care centers dedicated to underserved populations. "These remarkable physicians are to be commended for their leadership and mentorship in practice, research and academic accomplishments, and most importantly, for their tremendous impact in supporting and advancing a positive and supportive culture and community of women in medicine." says Dr. Nicole Sandhu, Past President of AMWA, and co-chair of the AMWA Leadership Council.

Beginning in 2021, the AMWA Leadership Council instituted the INSPIRE Award to highlight the women physicians who inspire others through their dedication to health care, compassion for

patients, leadership, advocacy, and community service. Recipients are nominated by colleagues, mentees, supervisors, students, or collaborators.

We present the 2026 AMWA INSPIRE Award recipients:

- Leslie Algase, MD - Clinical Associate Professor of Medicine, University of Rochester School of Medicine & Dentistry
- Bhooma R. Aravamuthan, MD, DPhil - Associate Professor of Neurology & Pediatrics, Washington University School of Medicine
- Rebekah Bernard, MD, FAAFP - Family Physician & Practice Owner
- Ja'Nelle M. Blocker, MD, ABOIM - Psychiatrist & Integrative Medicine Specialist, HUCM Spiritual Health & Wellness Center
- Jan K. Carney, MD, MPH - Associate Dean for Public Health, Larner College of Medicine
- Colleen Christmas, MD - Professor of Medicine, University of Arizona/Banner Health Tucson
- Melanie Cree, MD, PhD – Professor, Pediatric Endocrinology
- Grace Y. Gombolay, MD, FCNS - Associate Professor, Emory University & Children's Health care of Atlanta
- Kami Harless, MD - Director of Street Medicine, Assistant Professor, SIU School of Medicine
- Saba A. Hasan, MD, MACP - Program Director, Internal Medicine Residency & Associate DIO, Capital Health
- Tracey L. Henry, MD, MPH, MS, FACP - Adjunct Professor of Medicine, Emory University School of Medicine
- Martha L. Hlafka, MD - Professor of Clinical Internal Medicine, Southern Illinois University School of Medicine
- Amy K. Holbrook, MD, FACP - Associate Program Director, Abbott Northwestern Internal Medicine
- Teresa M. Hunter-Pettersen, MD, MPA, MS - Associate Professor, LECOM Medical Education
- Elena Jimenez-Gutierrez, MD, MSc - Associate Professor, University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio
- Kathryn R. Ko, MD, MFA - Chief, MetroNeurosurgery
- Gogi Kumar, MD - Professor of Pediatrics, Wright State University
- Padmini Murthy, MD, MPH, MS - Professor Emeritus, New York Medical College
- Suchitra Pilli, MD, MPH - Attending, Banner MD Anderson; Associate Professor, University of Arizona, Phoenix
- Karen Poirier-Brode, MD - OBGYN Physician, Artist
- Rachel S. Rubin, MD- Urologist and Sexual Medicine Specialist
- Nicole Schlechter, MD, PhD - OB/Gyn Hospitalist, Ascension Saint Thomas
- Sasha K. Shillcutt, MD, MS - Tenured Prof of Anesthesiology, University of Nebraska Medical Center
- Mary Katherine Scott Siebenaler, MD - Associate Professor, Southern Illinois University School of Medicine
- Divya Sistla, MD, FACP - Clinical Assistant Professor of Medicine, University of Pittsburgh Medical Center
- Damaris Vega, MD- Endocrinologist, CEO of Houston Endocrinology Center

• Akshra Verma, MD - Associate Professor, Southern Illinois University
• Ekaterina A. Vypritskaya, MD - Program Director (PD), Transitional Year Residency, Associate PD IM Residency, Capital Health System, NJ
• Michelle F. Wallen, DO - Associate Professor of Emergency Medicine, Orlando College of Osteopathic Medicine
• Tiffani L. Bell Washington, MD, MBA, MPH - Regional Medical Dir, Humana
• Janice L. Werbinski, MD - Associate Clinical Professor Emerita of OB/Gyn, Western Michigan University Homer Stryker MD School of Medicine

AMWA extends our congratulations to these remarkable women leaders. We thank those who nominated them for taking the time to share their inspiring stories and highlight the meaningful contributions they have made to the field of medicine.
Each of these women has had a profound influence on the culture of medicine and has enriched the lives of their colleagues, patients, and, ultimately, our health care system. We are proud to recognize their dedication, leadership, advocacy, and commitment to making medicine a better place for all.

ABOUT AMWA
The American Medical Women's Association (AMWA), founded in 1915, is the oldest multispecialty professional organization of women in medicine. Our mission is to advance women physicians and improve the health of women.

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