



## President's Newsletter – March 2021

Dear WPATH Members and Supporters,

I am pleased to announce that I have returned to WPATH, in my elected role as President. As many of you know, I was on a leave of absence due to (unexpected) heart surgery in November 2020 and subsequently contracted a severe bout of COVID-19, which further delayed my return.

I want to offer my sincerest thanks to Marci Bowers for stepping in as Interim President, during my absence. Marci, along with the Executive Committee, the Board of Directors, and WPATH Staff, have been able to move WPATH in the right direction, as we move into March 2021.

We are all aware of how difficult life has been for many of us since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. Many people have lost loved ones, and many had to cope with illness and disabling symptoms, often alone or in isolation. Many have lost their livelihood due to the pandemic, further compounding worries and distress. We can only hope that with the advent of various vaccines against COVID-19, lockdown measures and the restriction of personal freedom will lessen and eventually allow us to return to meet one another freely.

Within this latter context, the forthcoming USPATH 2021 Scientific Symposium will be held from 4-7 of November. Given safety, accessibility, and low probability of hosting an in-person USPATH Symposium the USPATH Board have, after much consideration, understandably decided to host a fully virtual USPATH Symposium. I sincerely hope, however, that the 27<sup>th</sup> WPATH Scientific Symposium in 2022 will be held as an in-person meeting with additional virtual options to lower costs. We will keep you informed regarding choice of location and dates, but in all likelihood safety, costs, and accessibility will continue to guide our options.

On a slightly different note, I would like to congratulate Dr Rachel Levine as nominee for assistant health secretary of the Biden/Harris administration in the US and assume her confirmation will occur shortly. Her appointment will undoubtedly be important to counteract the restrictive measures being put in place in various states in the US to access trans health care, particularly for young people.

Many of you may also have heard about the High Court ruling in London, United Kingdom of *Bell vs Tavistock and Portman NHS Foundation Trust* [2020] EWHC 3274. The ruling stated that trans adolescents can no longer start medical gender affirming treatment below the age of 16 unless a court order is obtained; the same procedure is also suggested for those aged 16 to 18. WPATH, in close collaboration with AusPATH, CPATH, EPATH, PATHA and USPATH strongly disagree with this ruling

and we believe this ruling will result in significant harm to the affected children and their families (of choice). [A Statement to this effect was published on 17 December 2020](#) and within the next few weeks an editorial will be published in the [International Journal of Transgender Health](#) by Annelou de Vries from Amsterdam, the Netherlands and other leading clinicians in our field, expanding on this Statement underpinned with a robust evidence base. The publication will be Open Access and hence available online free of charge.

The aforementioned examples highlight the enormous amount of work there is for us to do at WPATH; not only in North America and Europe, but also in other regions around the world where there is no or extremely limited access to trans health care, education and advocacy. We will continue to work on strategies to develop global outreach by partnering with local and international organizations. WPATH's Global Education Initiative (GEI) led by Drs Gail Knudson and Ren Massey and the Faculty will play an important role in achieving our mission and goal in this context.

Here are a few highlights of what has been going on at WPATH, and what is yet to come. We hope all of you will continue to engage, commit, and support our efforts.

- 2021 Virtual WPATH GEI Foundations Course launched in February – we already have over 225 registered attendees. There's still time to register, live-streamed panels do not begin until March 15<sup>th</sup> – [Click here to register now.](#)
- We already have over 2,000 members in February – for the first time, this year is set to break another record number of WPATH members. Thank you to all who have renewed and joined. [Click here to login and renew or join for 2021.](#) You are what makes WPATH stronger.
- The USPATH Board of Directors has announced that their 2021 Scientific Symposium will be virtual as aforementioned, save the dates of November 4 – 7, 2021. Be on the lookout for more information, but US members **can apply now** to be a part of the USPATH 2021 Scientific Symposium Steering Committee, [by clicking here.](#)
- We are on the home stretch regarding completing the Standards of Care Version 8. Our chapter groups have been working very hard. The Statements of all Chapters have now been accepted via the Delphi process. A Special thank you to Drs. Eli Coleman, Asa Radix and Jon Arcelus, who have been working around the clock with chapter leads and their workgroup members to complete the SOC8. Be on the lookout for the public comments phase of the process later in the year.
- Get ready to register for and participate in WPATH's first-ever **IJTH Journal Club Sessions**, and WPATH first-ever **Book Club Sessions**. More information to follow, very soon.
- WPATH is finalizing their Health Plan Provider Program, created in response to the California Senate Bill SB855.

This is just a small part of all the things happening at WPATH. We are so pleased to be able to continue our work to improve information-sharing, education, member engagement and volunteer participation for all of you, our members, and supporters.

With warmest regards and stay safe,

Walter

Walter Pierre Bouman, MD, PhD  
WPATH President