

# UMKC Health Sciences Library



*Dean Betty M. Drees, M.D., Barbara Atkinson, M.D., dean of the University of Kansas School of Medicine, and Sandra Willis, D.O., dean of Heartland Health Sciences University and former docent at the UMKC SOM, lead a discussion panel about women in medicine on Oct. 9, 2009, at the UMKC School of Medicine as part of the national traveling Changing the Face of Medicine exhibit.*

## collaborates with area medical schools for traveling Changing the Face

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**F**ormer UMKC School of Medicine Dean Marjorie S. Sirridge, M.D., was the keynote speaker at the opening event of the *Changing the Face of Medicine: Celebrating America's Women Physicians* exhibit.

**A featured physician in the exhibit, Sirridge shared inspirational stories of her medical education journey and those of other historic female medical figures during her speech.**

Kansas City was host for the national traveling exhibit from Oct. 3 to Nov. 11, 2009. The UMKC Health Sciences Library was part of the collaboration of the three medical schools in the metropolitan area that included the University of Kansas Medical Center's Dykes Library and the Kansas City University of Medicine and Biosciences Library. They worked together to coordinate and plan the events during the exhibition that was based at Dykes Library.

The School of Medicine held three events during the exhibit, which tells the story of American women's two-century struggle to access medical education and

celebrates their honors and achievements throughout the years.

In 2000, the National Library of Medicine (NLM) began developing an exhibition about the history of America's women physicians that would include 340 doctors spanning 160 years. Its goals were to illustrate the larger themes in the history of women in medicine, while inspiring the next generation of physicians, according to the NLM Web site.

Between August 2005 and November 2010, the *Changing the Face of Medicine* exhibit will have been on display in 61 libraries across the United States. The Exhibition Program developed several strategies to provide on-site and online visitors access. Components of the exhibition included a digital portrait gallery, interpretive videos, artifact interactions and a Web site to experience the stories of the featured women physicians.

The NLM, in Bethesda, Md., and the American Library Association, Chicago, Ill., organized the traveling exhibition with support from the NLM, the National Institutes of Health Office of Research on Women's Health, and the American Medical Women's Association. The traveling exhibition is based on a larger exhibit that was displayed at the NLM from 2003 to 2005. The local exhibit received additional support through grants from the National Network of Libraries



**Marjorie S. Sirridge, M.D., former dean of the UMKC School of Medicine and co-founder of the UMKC Sirridge Office of Medical Humanities and Bioethics, addresses the audience as the keynote speaker at the opening event of the Changing the Face of Medicine national traveling exhibit on Oct. 3, 2009, at the University of Kansas Medical Center's Dykes Library. Sirridge was also a featured physician in the exhibit. Photo courtesy of Marvin McInnis**

# of Medicine exhibit

of Medicine and the Health Sciences Library Network of Kansas City.

A discussion panel at the School of Medicine on Oct. 9, 2009, included Dean Betty Drees, M.D., Barbara Atkinson, M.D., dean of the University of Kansas School of Medicine and vice chancellor of the KU Medical Center, and Sandra Willsie, D.O., dean of Heartland Health Sciences University and former docent at the UMKC SOM. These three influential women shared their stories of triumph, challenges and accomplishments with an audience of mostly women students, residents, faculty and staff. Some strong, similar themes in the women's stories were the importance of mentors, passion, family support, and management of change.

Drees, who had already started a family before going to medical school, said she was fortunate to grow up with a group of strong women. She started out as an English major at the University of Kansas and later

transferred to Wichita State University. She took the advice of her WSU adviser, who suggested she study medicine. "To her it was just another day, but to me, it was a transforming thing," Drees said. "When people are at a transitional time, mentors can make a huge difference."

As dean of the SOM, Drees is an example of a role model of a woman in leadership. "I care deeply about the mission of this school," she said. "It's about being there to care for people who need you."

Drees advised future and current women physicians to strike a balance between blaming hardships on their gender and making sure they are treated fairly in the workplace.

Executive Leadership in Academic Medicine (ELAM), specifically aimed at women in leadership positions, was co-founded by Atkinson; Drees and Willsie are both alumnae of the program. Drees said the networking opportunity of the group is invaluable, as is a sense of self-awareness.

All three women mentioned the importance of taking time out for oneself and to have some fun. "Don't let yourself become isolated," Drees said. "Connect to other people." 

*"The entrance of women into the profession of medicine is an event of importance – not only to the medical profession but to society – and it will always have a place in human history."*  
– William H. Welch, M.D., first dean of Johns Hopkins School of Medicine, during a 1911 meeting of The New York Academy of Medicine. Johns Hopkins admitted women from the time of its establishment in 1893.