

Beyond band-aids:

Innovation to improve women's healthcare

Concept Note

Women have a right to the highest attainable standard of health, which serves as a key enabler for their participation in the social and economic life of their communities. Unfortunately, for far too many women around the world, quality healthcare remains out of reach. This is particularly true in the area of hormonal health, as women and girls face stigma and the dismissal and normalization of symptoms which can disrupt their daily lives.

Even when women and girls do seek help, many doctors struggle to diagnose and treat the underlying disorder. Decades of underinvestment and lack of research have left many healthcare providers reliant on hormonal birth control as the primary treatment for endocrine and reproductive issues. This approach may alleviate some discomfort but fails to restore healthy hormonal activity, leaving the underlying causes untreated, and may have harmful side effects, including for future fertility. Women and girls need access to care which meets their needs and respects their unique capacities. This requires adequate information about how their bodies work and the ability to monitor and track their body's signs and symptoms. They also need healthcare providers who can diagnose and treat hormonal imbalances at the root to restore health.

Some healthcare providers have been working to address this need, relying not on hormonal suppression but innovative research to make differential diagnoses and offer targeted treatments. One such organization is Fertility Education & Medical Management (FEMM). In partnership with the Reproductive Health Research Institute (RHRI), it has developed innovative diagnostic protocols which use existing tools such as lab tests, symptom tracking, and imaging to provide differential diagnoses and more targeted treatments to restore health, available to healthcare providers through continuing medical education programs. FEMM also offers fertility literacy classes to help women and girls to understand their bodies, track their health, and know when to seek treatment. Experts will discuss the policy & scientific gaps which have left women behind and the efforts underway to ensure that women can make informed choices and, crucially, that real choices are available to them.

Speakers:

- H.E. Archbishop Gabriele Caccia, *Apostolic Nuncio and Permanent Observer of the Holy See to the United Nations*
- Ms. Anna Halpine, *CEO, Fertility Education & Medical Management Foundation (FEMM)*
- Dr. Virginia de la Lastra, *Research collaborator, Reproductive Health Research Institute (RHRI)*
- Dr. Danielle Koestner, *Chief Medical Officer, FEMM*