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July Meeting of the East Bay Chapter of the Association for Women in Science

Professor Mary Dallman

University of California, San Francisco

Chronic Stress and Comfort Food: Why Might Belly Fat Increase?

TUESDAY, July 12TH, 2005

Chiron Corp. Room 4.104, Emeryville

6:30 pm Light Supper

7:00 pm Meeting Begins

See www.ebawis.org or p. 3 for directions

Responses to stressors include increased activity of the adrenocortical system that secretes glucocorticoids. In most vertebrates, glucocorticoids act on body tissues to promote breakdown of protein and fat in the extremities and increase glucose production by the liver. They can also act together with insulin to promote storage of extra calories rather selectively in abdominal fat. Furthermore, in rats, fish, and probably in people too, glucocorticoids act on the brain to increase many behaviors associated with food intake, and, in the presence of insulin, increase the preference for “comfort” foods (those high in fat and sugars). When exposed to chronic stressors, rats voluntarily increase comfort food ingestion at the expense of the usual chow and increase stores of abdominal fat. A still-unidentified signal from increased belly fat appears to reduce the magnitude of subsequent adrenocortical stress responses, indicating, perhaps, that eating comfort food is a form of self-medication that is used to feel better during stress. (*cont. next page*)

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Mary Dallman majored in Chemistry at Smith College, where she fell in love with the cyclopentanoperhydrophenanthrene ring structure of cholesterol and the steroid hormones. Since then, she has focused on the physiology of stress steroids during her PhD work in Physiology at Stanford, and as a post-doctoral fellow and then as a faculty member in Physiology at UCSF. Much of her work has entailed the study of the inhibitory feedback regulation of the brain-pituitary-adrenal stress axis by its final product, corticosterone. In the most recent years she has examined the effects of chronic stress on corticosteroids, and their effects on feeding behavior and obesity.

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Go to the national AWIS Web site
<http://www.awis.org/membershipbenefits.html>

President's Message

It is election time!

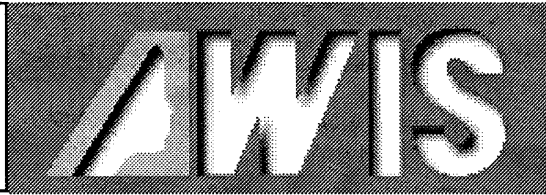
So you have never considered running for an ebAWIS office? I want to encourage you to run for office. Me, I never really considered it, but I ran after Kitty DeJong pestered me for a few years. The time commitment is manageable and worthwhile—I have met many new folks at ebAWIS and at the other Northern California Chapters.

AWIS has a richness that you may not have appreciated. Dr. Ellen Weaver spoke at the April Awards Banquet. She gave us a taste of the pioneering efforts of women scientists of more than 50 years ago. Stories of her day-to-day experiences made the audience laugh. We laughed at those things that have changed as much as at those that have not changed. Your experiences may make others laugh 50 years from now. We can make a difference, You can make a difference through AWIS. Whether it is through mentoring, organizing chapter meetings, speakers, or keeping the books, consider getting involved.

Did you attend Dr. Kimberlee Shauman's talk at the May chapter meeting? It was a window into her book, the misinterpretation of which brought Dr. Summers (and Harvard) so much grief. (See the meeting report on page 3.)

Join us July 12 to hear Dr. Mary Dallman speaking about comfort food and belly fat—a topic nearer to many of us than we would like. (See page 1 for more information.)

Terry Calarco



May Meeting Report: Speaker Dr. Kimberlee A. Shauman

By Laura McDevitt, Publicity Chair ebAWIS

“Women in Science: Past Progress and Persistent Challenges” was the topic for the May meeting. Speaker Dr. Kimberlee Shauman, professor from U.C. Davis, discussed findings from her recent book co-authored with Yu Xie, *Women in Science: Career Processes and Outcomes*, and a lively discussion ensued about women’s career paths into the science and engineering professions. She provided various reasons why women leave those particular fields at a higher rate than men.

Dr. Shauman presented data from across generations and throughout the nation to construct the path of women’s education leading to careers in science and engineering. While affirming the progress that has been made for women in science, she focused on the continuing gender differences in mathematics and science education and in the progress and outcomes of scientists' careers. She talked also about gender differences in undergraduate and graduate science education, in scientists' geographic mobility, in research productivity, in promotion rates and earnings, and in the experience of immigrant scientists as further elaborated on in her book.

She further talked about her interpretation of the data that came up in a recent debate generated by a comment of Harvard’s University President Lawrence Summers. It has been noticed that girls in high school scored lower on certain math tests, and it is thought this contributes to a relatively small number of women in high-level positions in science, mathematics, and engineering. Summers commented that innate differences between men and women might be one reason for the discrepancy between the sexes in choosing and becoming high-achievers in science, math, and engineering academics and careers.

She rebutted Summers’ use of the data attributing one causative agent—girls’ math scores in high school—to explain why women were not found in high-level positions. Factors such as the more active role of women in family life, the balancing of career and family, and other social influences could cause women to leave the scientific career track. For example, women gain undergraduate degrees in science and engineering but under-utilize their degrees or scientific potential. These lower numbers would contribute to reasons why women aren’t found at the high-level positions as well, so math scores cannot be taken in isolation. An interesting discussion about dual career patterns of couples or family units and mobility of researchers, post-docs in particular, also was discussed at the end of the talk.

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From San Francisco: Take 101 North/I-80 East towards San Francisco. Continue on I-80 across the Bay Bridge. I-80 then joins I-580 (left lanes). Immediately move to the far right lanes and take the Ashby Avenue exit, the next exit past Powell Street. Exit at Ashby Avenue and proceed under the railroad overcrossing, then turn right on 7th Street at the light. Turn right on Folger Avenue and follow the road as it turns left and becomes Hollis Street. Continue on Hollis, across Powell Street, and turn right on 53rd Street. Chiron is the third driveway on the left (4560 Horton Street).

From Oakland: Take I-880 North. Continue past Oakland to the I-980 interchange towards Walnut Creek. Proceed to I-580 West to San Francisco then to I-80 East. Stay to the right and proceed towards Berkeley on I-80 East/I-580 West. Exit Powell Street and turn right on Powell at the light. Continue on Powell over the overpass to Hollis Street. At the light turn right on Hollis and then right again on 53rd Street. Chiron is the third driveway on the left.

From Walnut Creek: Take Highway 80 East toward Berkeley from Highway 24 Westbound, Exit Powell Street and turn right on Powell at the stop light. Continue on Powell over the overpass to Hollis Street. At the light turn right on Hollis and then another right turn on 53rd Street. Chiron is the third driveway on the left.

From the South Bay: Take I-880 North. Take I-980 exit towards Highway 24/Walnut Creek. Take the I-580 exit towards San Francisco/Hayward. Take the I-580 West exit on left towards San Francisco. Merge onto I-580 West. Turn slight right at the intersection of I-80 West Ramp to stay on I-580 West. Take the Powell Street exit towards Emeryville and turn right on Powell at the stop light. Continue on Powell over the overpass to Hollis Street. At the stop light at Hollis turn right, then right again onto 53rd Street. Chiron is the third driveway on the left.

Park for the AWIS meeting in the visitor parking area you will see immediately after turning off 53rd Street into the Chiron driveway. Our meeting takes place in the large brick façade building with purple and yellow stucco located across 53rd Street from visitor parking. Enter at the doors nearest the big yellow stucco ball. We meet in room 4.104.

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