



## IN MEMORIAM

---



### **Felicia Hance Stewart, MD, 1943-2006**

FELICIA HANCE STEWART, AGE 63, died of lung cancer on April 13 at her home in San Carlos.

Felicia had a private practice in Sacramento for 20 years. I, and several Sacramento obstetricians and gynecologists, shared time in that practice she began with her late ex-husband, Dr. Gary Stewart. The couple started their careers as fellow residents at UCSF. They were also medical directors of Planned Parenthood in Sacramento.

Felicia was a director of medical research for the Sutter Medical Foundation. She served briefly on the Board of Directors of SSVMS before leaving Sacramento in 1994 to become deputy assistant secretary for population affairs at HHS during the Clinton Administration. After Washington, she directed reproductive health programs at the Henry J. Kaiser Foundation in Menlo Park and worked again for Planned Parenthood.

Felicia Stewart is best known nationally for her advocacy of emergency contraception methods. She and James Trussell, director of the Office of Population Research at Princeton University, are credited with the successful introduction of "Plan B," now used as a single dose of levonorgestrol in the first 5 days after unprotected intercourse to prevent an unwanted pregnancy. She long was an advocate for emergency contraception. During my residency at UCDMC, I recall she taught us to offer the "Yuzpe" method to rape victims in the ER. Felicia and her colleagues studied the effects of EC on sexual behavior and found pre-written prescriptions of Plan B (that allow women to obtain "morning after" tablets when needed) did not lead to abuse of the drug and that its easy availability did not lead to increased promiscuity, as noted by Dr. P. Darney, her co-director for five years at the UC San Francisco Bixby Center for Reproductive Research and Policy.

Dr. Felicia Stewart was an advocate for safe and legal abortion. Thanks to her efforts, qualified midwives and nurse practitioners are allowed to perform abortions in California.

She was committed to women's reproductive health and to empowering women to take charge of their bodies and their health. To this end, she authored *Understanding Your Body: The Concerned Woman's Guide to Gynecology and Health*. Dr. Stewart wrote many articles and was a co-author of *Contraceptive Technology*, a major technical reference of family planning. She won the Olivia Schieffelin Nordberg award for Excellence in Writing and Editing in the Population Sciences in 2005.

A graduate of UC Berkeley, she received her medical degree from Harvard University Medical School in 1969. She worked in Boston and New York before she returned to California and started residency.

Felicia was a person of profound passion. Her greatest passions in life were her children and step-children and their children. She loved reading and classical music.

The program of her Fort Mason Chapel memorial service shares a quote about Felicia

from Jan Hoffman published in *The New York Times Magazine*, January 10, 1993. "The respect colleagues accord her is tinged with the particular affection reserved for cheerful human gale forces."

We remember her ironic sense of humor. At her service, I was reminded of her mythical hormones, dutigen and vacuumugen. These decline at menopause so that you no longer feel dutiful to silly things and don't feel compelled to vacuum everything. She also felt the reason for far-sightedness with age was so we no longer notice the dust. She believed that PMS is a condition modified by cultural expectations and that in some women progesterone may bring normal anger and annoyance to light when the overly pacifying effects of estrogen dominance in the follicular phase are no longer present.

Felicia ran a sound business practice. The IRS had audited the practice for five years straight, causing no end of stress and paranoia. Finally, the question - why? The answer - after the first audit, the IRS had been bringing back trainees to learn just what a well-run medical practice should look like. To the relief of our accountant and staff, the IRS was persuaded our office had done its part in service to the government and audits stopped.

What I miss most of all about Felicia was how she listened and cared. I learned so much about listening and reassuring patients from her. You cannot read *Understanding Your Body* without being aware that Felicia wrote down many conversations.

It was always a trifle alarming, when she pulled out her little book and reminded you of that comment you had casually made a week ago, to find that Felicia had been meditating on it for that time and felt it a meaningful truth. It reminded you that Felicia always thought deeply, felt strongly, and spoke carefully and most of all cared about you and what you had to say. I think she believed the real great truths in life were human beings and it is my privilege to have been one who knew her.

Felicia Stewart is survived by her parents Lena and Harold Hance of Palo Alto, her brother, Alan Hance of Paris, France, her adult children, Matthew and Kathryn Stewart of San Carlos, and her stepchildren, Tammy Barlow of Sacramento and Wayne and Michael Stewart of Utah.

- Karen Poirier-Brode, MD

Sierra Sacramento Valley Medical Society  
5380 Elvas Avenue #100 • Sacramento, CA 95819  
916.452.2671 PH • 916.452.2690 FX • Email: info@ssvms.org

Copyright © 2000-2008 Sierra Sacramento Valley Medical Society - All Right's Reserved