

Moore Medicine

As physician, writer and NBC TV host, Dr. Donnica Moore fights the good fight for women's health

BY BY SABRINA MARTIN

PHYSICIAN, medical editor, writer, radio show host, and most importantly, mother of two, Dr. Donnica Moore is blazing her own trail on the cutting edge of women's health medicine. At times wearing many of these hats concurrently, Dr. Moore has had an impressive and varied career since graduating from Princeton University in 1981, from goodwill ambassador to Ireland to medical correspondent for NBC. Her latest endeavor is as founder and president of Sapphire Women's Health Group (SWHG), a medical consulting firm that focuses solely on women's health issues.

Dr. Moore has had a significant role in bringing women's health topics to light during the past 20 years. She is a leader in the movement to take a closer look at medicine and how common diseases and conditions specifically affect women. Shortly after completing her medical degree, Dr. Moore worked for a prominent pharmaceutical company, where she was able to start the company on a path toward researching women's health. Later, Dr. Moore, together with members of the Society for Women's Health Research, helped create an office of research for women's health at the National Institutes of Health to bring awareness to three specific concerns: heart disease, breast cancer and osteoporosis.

"There are many exciting and innovative cutting edge developments in women's health today. The biggest advance is that more and more medical research is being conducted in women. The more we learn, the more we see that women's health is not just reproductive health," Dr. Moore explains. "For example, we are learning that sex differences matter in conditions as diverse as heart disease to headaches."

Taking time from her current careers as columnist for First For Women magazine, medical editor of Women in Medicine magazine, guest speaker and columnist and more, Dr. Moore stole a few minutes to speak with me about SWHG during her coffee break at the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists' annual conference in New Orleans. Exuberant and laid back, Dr. Moore is enthusiastic about the current breakthroughs in women's medicine and the power of the media to disseminate information to the general public. By working with corporate clients including pharmaceutical companies, publishing houses and communications firms, SWHG educates consumers about health issues, focusing on those stigmatized by society. By providing women with information on the latest medicines and procedures to treat conditions from incontinence to menopause, SWHG works with its clients to bring awareness to these issues.

"Diseases and conditions once only whispered about in ladies rooms are now front page stories in news



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rooms. In the background, SWHG advises corporate clients on these important clinical and business developments; in the foreground, SWHG often serves as a trusted, experienced women's health communicator or, in many respects, translator," Dr. Moore says.

Dr. Moore founded SWHG in 1996. The firm fills a unique niche in the realm of medical consulting by focusing exclusively on women's health issues in the areas of education, communications, outreach and research. SWHG also operates DrDonnica.com, a women's health information Web site featuring hundreds of articles, most written by Dr. Moore. Receiving more than 7 million hits a month, DrDonnica.com covers a variety of topics from how to choose a gynecologist to debunking commonly held medical myths. It also offers extensive explanations of several diseases and conditions and the popular "celebrity speak out" column, where celebrities including Scott Hamilton and Lauren Hutton share their experiences with health issues. Dr.

Moore refers to her method of education as "medicine lite" and adds to her communication attack by doing multi-media work through extensive public speaking, writing, television, and radio. Dr. Moore was the medical expert on both NBC's Later Today Show and Weekend Today Show. She was also heard daily on the nationally syndicated radio show, Dr. Donnica's Women's Health Report.

"In my television, radio and live appearances, I try to use humor as the 'spoon full of sugar' that helps the medicine go down. No one wants to be scared by medical statistics into taking action, whether it is getting a mammogram or having a colonoscopy: joking about it — and personalizing it — goes a long way toward destigmatizing it."

Always ahead of the game, Dr. Moore entered Princeton University at age 16, the youngest in her class. She grew up in a lower-middle class Brooklyn neighborhood and reaped the benefits of inner-city programs aimed at under-privileged children such as Dr. Moore and her five younger siblings. Her career path has been laid down around obstacles that have landed in her way — mainly issues with her own health. A long-time struggle with scoliosis and unsatisfactory doctors' visits led Dr. Moore to study medicine — to become a doctor who put the patient first. During her residency at Temple University, Dr. Moore went through major surgery to correct her spine and was later urged by her surgeon to not continue a physically demanding medical practice. Continuing to work in her area of interest, endocrinology, Dr. Moore began a career researching female hormones for a major pharmaceutical company. A case of Lyme disease then forced Dr. Moore to leave this position and spurred her to start SWHG. When asked about the overwhelming prospect of a mother of two starting her own business, Dr. Moore responds that it is an ideal situation to be able to raise her children and be a successful businesswoman.

"The best comment I heard about starting your own business is that, 'Before you do it, it seems like you're about to jump off a mountain. Once you do it, you realize you just jumped off the curb.' What I like to say is that 'You CAN do it all and be it all — just not at the same time.'" By arranging her time and priorities around her family, Dr. Moore is able to run her company and participate in her children's lives. "My number one priority in my life is my children. It gives me a great sense of accomplishment that I can do what I do professionally without compromising my role as a mother."

In her precious free time, Dr. Moore is a prolific reader and has just finished the children's book "Holes," by Louis Sachar. She also remains very connected to her alma mater, Princeton University, and it has been said that her blood runs "orange and black."