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Practical Neurology (ISSN 1540-1367) is published by Bryn Mawr Communications, LLC (BMC), 1008 Upper Gulph Road, Suite 200, Wayne PA 19087. BPA membership received 2002. Printed at R.R. Donnelley, Spencer, IA. Copyright 2008, Bryn Mawr Communications, LLC. Subscriptions are \$125.00 per year.

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EDITOR'S MESSAGE

By Paul Winnington

An Historic Election and Opportunity for Change

Much as been made of Hillary Rodham Clinton's triumphant exclamation that her supporters helped her create "18 million cracks" in the glass ceiling that has kept women from attaining the nation's highest executive position. The subsequent selection of Sarah Palin as the GOP running mate has made the 2008 election an historic one for women on either side of the aisle.

With the election just days away, Associate Editor Zac Haughn offers a look at the presidential candidate's views on healthcare on page 20.

In an age where women have attained such success, it strikes me as particularly troubling that many physicians—including a fair number of women—still refer to their female office staff as "the girls." It's common for many doctors to "have my girls look into that" or "talk to the girls" about a particular concern.

While referring to "the girls" or "my girls" has been an element of the medical parlance for years, it seems the time has come to abandon the terminology. Surely, most physician employers respect and value the contributions of their female office staff and mean no insult by their language. In fact, most probably think of the "girl" label as a term of endearment. These valuable employees are like members of the family.

But the reality is that referring to hard-working women over the age of 18—many of whom have impressive post-secondary schooling—as "girls" simply is not appropriate.

Aside from slighting the women who keep many practices running smoothly, frequent reference to "the girls" ignores the reality that men work as nurses, medical technicians, receptionists, and billers. Yet when a physician says, "I'll talk to the boys," the reference almost always is to colleagues/partners, and the proposition in question is usually of a commercial nature that may be of benefit to all involved.

The fact that many staff members use the term self-reflexively ("We girls are going to order lunch," or, "The girls chipped in for the new coffee pot") does not absolve the physician of his/her duty to establish a tone of respect and appreciation.

Whatever the outcome of the election next month, Hillary Clinton and Sarah Palin have made history. Isn't it time for references to "the girls" in medical practices to *be* history? **PN**

Paul F. Winnington

