

Where are the Women?



A new study presents one area where gender inequality in healthcare is observed: women are ignored when it comes to medical society awards. According to the study, there is a zero or near-zero representation of women physicians among recognition award recipients across a range of medical specialities.

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The findings are published in PM&R, the journal of the American Academy of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation (AAPM&R). Lead author Julie K. Silver, MD, says the report isn't really about the awards, it's about opening doors for women physicians. Dr. Silver is also an associate professor and the associate chair for strategic initiatives in the Department of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation at Harvard Medical School and the Spaulding Rehabilitation Network.

Dr. Silver and her colleagues started out looking at the recipients of physician recognition awards in the medical society she belongs to, AAPM&R. They found the gender gap was greatest for the most prestigious awards, especially those associated with lectureships. In 40 of the 48 years they reviewed, no women physicians received those awards despite the fact that 1 in 3 physicians in the speciality are women.

Mostly similar results were obtained after the researchers examined data from other medical societies within different specialities such as neurology, dermatology, anaesthesiology, orthopaedic surgery, head and neck surgery, and plastic surgery.

For Dr. Silver and co-authors, the study highlights the need for medical societies to examine gender diversity and inclusion, look for causes and implement strategies to improve the gender gap. The study includes a "six-part call to action" to ensure medical societies tackle workplace disparities.

In a separate opinion article published in STAT, Dr. Silver asked if academic leaders should encourage trainees and faculty members to join these medical societies if they do not equitably support physicians from women and other underrepresented groups. She termed this "mentoring against a closed gate," since no matter their talents they aren't going to be let in.

The doctor believes that mentoring early-career physicians against a closed gate is unethical. "Their mentors, including me, are not serving them well morally or financially by encouraging them to join organisations that will not equitably support them," Dr. Silver wrote.

Source: [FierceHealthcare](#)
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