



American Medical Women's Association
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Gender discrimination impacts physician pay disparities

In recent weeks, a misinformed comment by a Plano, Texas doctor concerning unequal pay standards in the medical profession exposed facts that are well-known to female physicians: Gender discrimination casts a long shadow over both attitudes and compensation.

The *Dallas Medical Journal*, in their "Big and Bright Ideas" section, recently interviewed a small group of physicians that revealed a glaring misperception about the pay equity issues within the medical community. Each of the participants was asked if they believe a pay gap exists between male and female physicians. If so, what is the cause? And what steps can physicians take as individuals and as a community to address this issue?

Dr. Gary Tigges asserted, "Female physicians do not work as hard and do not see as many patients as male physicians. This is because they choose to, or they simply don't want to be rushed, or they don't want to work the long hours. "Nothing needs to be 'done' about this," Dr. Tigges continued, "unless female physicians actually want to work harder and put in the hours."

While the public outcry in response to these comments led Dr. Tigges to apologize, many reports ignored the fact that pay disparities are all too common across the country.

"Pay equity issues in all professions must be addressed," said Dr. Theresa Rohr-Kirchgraber, AMWA Advocacy Committee Co-Chair. "Just because women physicians may have responsibilities that compete with their clinical practice, does not mean they deserve less compensation for the same amount of work."

Recently, a female physician, just out of residency, was offered a position at an Ivy League academic medical center. She was excited at the opportunity after all of the hard work she had endured during her time in residency. That excitement was cut short when she compared her offer letter for the same position with a male medical school classmate. The male physician was offered \$60,000 more than the female physician.

"This is not only bad for women physicians, this is bad for health care," Dr. Neeraja Chandrasekaran, Advocacy Chair of AMWA Residents Division. "Research has shown that patients of women physicians may actually have better outcomes than their male colleagues, with lower 30 day readmissions, less morbidity and mortality, and improved surgical outcomes."

Medical literature confirms that when controlling for confounding variables like age, specialty choice, leadership roles, location and hours worked, the relationship between gender and compensation is not completely explained. So gender discrimination and bias seem to be playing a significant role in disparities.

The American Medical Women's Association (AMWA) will continue to lead in creating awareness in the gender pay gap issue for future female physicians everywhere.

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