

Survey Assessing the Attitudes and Knowledge of Programs on Gender Equity



WAYNE STATE
School of Medicine

Miloni Shah ¹, Beena Sood, MD, MS, FAAP ², Kate Sheppard, MPH, MSW ³

¹Wayne State University School of Medicine, MD Program ²Detroit Medical Center, Department of Pediatrics

³Mclaren Macomb Medical Center, Department of Medical Education

INTRODUCTION

As of 2020, more than half of medical students in the United States are women. However, numerous barriers negatively affect women's opportunities in the medical field. These factors include an absence of mentorship programs, workplace harassment, and gendered implicit biases.¹ Lack of support of maternity leave and childbearing resources place a unique burden on women.² Residency and fellowship programs are a key part of medical training, where women must be given the agency and opportunity to grow in their field. Therefore, it is important to survey future and current physicians in training about the improvements they hope to see in their medical training. **The goal of this study is to assess how important medical students believe certain gender equity and family friendly policies are for creating opportunities for future physicians.**

METHODS

WSUSOM medical students were asked to complete a 5-minute anonymous Qualtrics survey.

1. How important are each of the following factors/benefits in selecting your future residency/fellowship program?
(1 = Essential, 2 = Very Important, 3= Somewhat Important, 4= Unimportant)

Gender Equity Recommendations

Categories were created based on the ACP Gender Equity Recommendations¹

Family Friendly Practices

Adopted from American Pediatrics' Annual Survey of Graduating Residents³

2. How important do you think it is to make improvements in the current areas?
(1= Very Important, 2= Important, 3 = Neutral, 4= Low Importance, 5 = Not at all Important)

Parental leave
Mentorship
Implicit bias training
Flexible scheduling
Board eligibility
Nursing breaks
Lactation rooms

3. What recommendations do you have about improving gender equity in physicians training programs and the workplace?

CONCLUSION

There must be a greater emphasis on improving gender equity policies in medical training programs in order to create equal opportunities for growth and success. Medical students indicate an importance of family friendly practices, improved harassment reporting procedures, flexible scheduling, and female leadership. They indicate a need for improvement in parental leave policies and mentorship.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

This study is currently a work in progress as part of a larger project to survey medical students alongside program directors, teaching faculty, administration, residents, and fellows regarding gender equity and family friendly policies. A broader goal of this project is to assess the availability and utilization of certain policies in training programs and compare them to the needs to medical trainees in an effort to improve gender equity standards.

RESULTS

Figure 1. Preliminary response rate is 14.2% and the gender equity factors are listed in order of importance to medical students.

Gender Equity Recommendations	N	Mean
Ability to utilize the reporting procedures for harassment and discrimination without fear of negative consequences	170	1.44
Proper understanding of reporting procedures for harassment and discrimination	170	1.60
Inclusion of female members on job search committees	169	1.69
Implicit bias training for workplace discrimination/bias	170	1.77
Paid family/medical leave outside of sick leave	170	1.78
Flexible consideration in board eligibility in case of family or medical leave	170	1.88
Sufficient opportunities to seek out mentors of the same gender if preferred	170	2.15
Additional paid leave as an extension of paid medical/family leave outside of sick leave	170	2.18

Figure 2. Preliminary response rate is 13.9% and the family friendly practices are listed in order of importance to medical students.

Family Friendly Practices	N	Mean
Individual flexibility with rotational schedule	167	1.85
Individual flexibility with daily schedule	167	1.98
Care for ill children	167	2.27
Nursing room breaks	167	2.36
Subsidized child care	167	2.36
Lactation rooms	167	2.46
On site child care	167	2.50
Shared residency programs	167	2.85
Part-time residency programs	167	2.88

Figure 3. Preliminary response rate is 13.6% and areas of improvement for gender equity are listed in order of importance to medical students.

Need for Improvement	N	Mean
Parental Leave	163	1.61
Mentorship	163	1.75
Implicit bias training	163	1.80
Flexible scheduling	163	1.88
Board eligibility	163	1.90
Nursing breaks	163	1.98
Lactation rooms	162	2.01

Figure 4. Recommendations to improve gender equity based on free responses.

"Topics such as maternity leave and parental leave should be advertised on residency program websites so students can avoid bias by inquiring during interviews but still be able to know pertinent information that are greatly influential in residency program selection. Transparency also improves discussion and accountability for these matters amongst programs."

"I recommend that programs allow maternal leave without penalty such as increased length of residency. I also recommend more accommodations for new mothers who have a hard time adjusting, whether it be extended deadlines or more flexibility with hours if the mother is lacking in sleep or reasonably late due to caring for her child."

"It can't be for only younger or newer additions. The older and more established physicians often set the culture, and they're often a resilient source of casual sexism. Improvements ..must also include training to the longstanding members of the profession, or else newer members will still feel the bias and discrimination."

"Required implicit bias training that includes a focus on the importance of language surrounding topics of gender, race/ethnicity/nationality, religion, sexual orientation and gender identity, and ability."

REFERENCES

- Butkus R, Serchen J, Moyer DV, Bornstein SS, Hingle ST. Health and Public Policy Committee of the American College of Physicians. Achieving Gender Equity in Physician Compensation and Career Advancement: A Position Paper of the American College of Physicians. *Ann Intern Med*. 2018;168(10):721-723. doi:10.7326/M17-3438
- Berkowitz CD, Frintner MP, Cull WL. Pediatric Resident Perceptions of Family-Friendly Benefits. *Academic Pediatrics*. 2010;10(5):360-366. doi:10.1016/j.acap.2010.06.013
- AAP.org. 2019. *Annual Survey Of Graduating Residents*. [online] Available at: <<https://www.aap.org/en-us/professional-resources/research/pediatrician-surveys/Pages/Annual-Survey-of-Graduating-Residents.aspx>> [Accessed 2 May 2020].