

Male vs Female Physicians in Advanced Endoscopy- Can We Bridge the Gap?

Annie Shergill* and Luis Nasiff

Larkin Community Hospital, Palm Springs Campus, Hialeah, FL, USA

*Corresponding author

Annie Shergill, Larkin Community Hospital, Palm Springs Campus, Hialeah, FL, USA.

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The ever-present disparity between men and women in different spheres of life have long driven a conversation about how to bring women to the forefront. With the advent of social media, this conversation is more relevant than ever before. According to the International Labor Organization, the current global labor force participation rate for women is just under 47% for women and 72% for men.

Bringing this discussion closer to home, a similar disparity exists in the field of GI and particularly in the field of Advanced Endoscopy. Jessica X Yu et al aimed to evaluate the underrepresentation of women in the Advanced Endoscopy Fellowship (AEF) match wherein only 12.8% of the fellows who matched were women in 2019 [1]. A web-based survey was done amongst 64 program directors of AEF programs to assess the program characteristics, different barriers and facilitators [1]. Women were found to represent 14.8% of the AEF faculty and 10% of the trainees were women over a 10-year period [1]. 47.4% of the people reported no female AEF faculty and 31.6% of the programs had never had a female fellow [1]. Major barriers that were identified included inflexible work and call hours, fluoroscopy exposure and lack of female mentorship.

In the words of former PepsiCo CEO, Ms. Indra Nooyi- “For women, the biological clock and the career clock are in total conflict with each other”. Her words will resonate with women from all walks of life and most certainly take center stage when discussing the shockingly low number of women in the field of Advanced Endoscopy. Continuing her discussion about whether women can have it all, Ms Nooyi highlights an excellent point- “we will have to outsource and ask for help as women to have it all”. And this thought process may pave the path for increased inclusivity and participation from women in Advanced Endoscopy. Having a support system at work and outside of work will be key. Encouraging women to come to the forefront of global conferences to break the otherwise

male-dominated stereotypes, will change the topography of the Advanced Endoscopy world. Initiatives taken by organizations such as ‘Women in Endoscopy’ create opportunities for women in GI to take up leadership roles in the industry; find help, support and guidance from fellow women in GI. The only way forward for women in GI or any other field is together. While we the numbers appeared grim, there is hope for change in the near future [1].

References

1. Yu JX, Berzin TM, Enestvedt B, Anderson MA, Popov VB, et al. Gender disparities in advanced endoscopy fellowship. *Endosc Int Open*. 2021. 9: E338-E342.

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