

Women in medicine and academia: barriers and potential solutions to progression

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Outline of the presentation

Background

- Women doctors in the UK
- Women in academic medicine
- Why do we need more women in leadership roles?

Career progression in medicine and academia

- Barriers to progression
- Potential solutions



Background



Female doctors in the UK will outnumber men in the future

- Women have made up the majority of entrants to medical school since the early 1990s (54% 2012).
- The number and proportion of female doctors is growing.



The number:

- Exceeded 100,000 for the first time in 2011.
- Has continued to grow at a faster rate than male doctors.
- Is expected to exceed that of male doctors between 2017 and 2022.

Proportion:

- Currently up to 48% of registered doctors are female. (GMC, 2012)



Career progression of doctors

More men are promoted to senior positions than women.

Those working full time progress more than those working part time.

96% of male doctors in hospital practice became consultants.

92% of female doctors working full time,
67% of female doctors working part time.



Women doctors are under represented in the following:

- Academia
- British Medical Association
- Royal Colleges
- as clinical and medical directors
- as medical school deans
- in senior leadership positions at board level



(Newman, 2011)



The Great Britain
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Women in academic medicine

USA: Females under-represented in leadership positions in academic medicine:

- 19% of full professors

UK: Women are under-represented at each clinical academic grade.

In the last 10 years there has been significant increase in representation of women to:

- 15.9% of professors
- 42.5% of Senior Lecturers and Lecturers



Why do we need more women in leadership roles?

- To draw on a broader range of skills, talent and expertise.
- To represent other women's needs.
- To bring different perspectives, and different leadership styles and behaviours.

Women tend to have a people-centred leadership style and focus on teams and relationships.

Women often focus on communication and collaboration.

- To create role models who will be able to inspire, train, nurture and sponsor other women.



Barriers to career progression





Organisational Barriers

Direct discrimination is illegal since 1975 (Sex Discrimination Act)

Indirect and unconscious discrimination continue

Organisational culture e.g. careers structures, male prejudice, environment, opportunities available, working practices, ‘unconscious bias’ (Newman, 2011; Pololi et al, 2012)

Organisational barriers:

- Meetings that reflect the male dominated culture (men dominant)
- Evening meetings (ignoring carer role)
- Lack of role models and mentors

Gender patterning – organisations are set up by men, for men about men

Career patterning – women are more often on education committees, men are more often on research committees

Lifestyle barriers

Difficulties in achieving a desired work-life balance

Women are still the main carers (e.g. children, parents)

Career breaks, childcare, difficulty combining professional and family demands

Lack of flexible working opportunities

Women do more part time work

- 5% of male hospital consultants work part-time
- 38% of female hospital consultants work part-time

Role conflict: domestic, clinical and leadership roles.





Academic barriers

The 'ideal academic' reflects a narrow perception of success (De Vries 2013)

- Focus on individuals not teams
- Values research over teaching
- Values competitive research grants over others
- Values certain types of research methods over others
- Values certain types of research outputs
- Values homogeneity (same type of people) over diversity
- Lack of recognition for developing junior staff
- Women's academic outputs exceed men's later in career (Reed et al, 2011)

Individual Barriers



Mind-sets:

Women tend to under estimate ability:

Individual e.g. lack of self belief, confidence in ability to do the job, relatively low aspiration, low expectations (Newman et al, 2011)

Stereotype threat (Burgess et al, 2012)

Women tend to apply late for promotion when they have more than they need

Men tend to apply early, before they are completely ready



Potential Solutions



Potential solutions

Is it about:

“Changing the women”?

“Changing the organisation”?

“Changing both”?



Potential solutions targeted at women:

- Mentoring
- Sponsorship
- Good support networks



Mentoring

Definition: traditional mentoring

‘a relationship between an older, more experienced mentor and a younger, less experienced protégé for the purpose of helping and developing the protégé’s career’ (Ragins & Kram, 2007)



Benefits of mentoring:

- **Mentoring may challenge the mind-set**
e.g. of lower confidence, low aspirations, waiting to be asked
- **Mentoring can facilitate networking**
- **Provides support with:** career development; job related well-being; reduction in work-family conflict (Taylor et al, 2009; Dutta et al, 2011)
- **Evidence mentoring leads to more time on research and more publications**
(Kaderli et al, 2011)



Sponsorship

A **sponsor** is a senior individual who is willing to link his or her reputation to an individual: can provide support with promotions.

Examples of sponsorship:

- adding a junior name to an grant application
- inviting membership to a committee
- suggesting suitability for a new role or post
- suggesting promotion,
- recommendation to others



Sponsorships - a positive intervention,

need to make the process more transparent to ensure it is offered to all.

(De Vries, 2013)

Good support networks

Provide peer support (online or face to face) and informally share experiences.

- Are interactive, participative and non hierarchical.
- Provide role models.
- Challenge mind-set e.g. increase assertiveness and negotiation.
- Signpost women to other sources of support.
- Provide information on childcare and career breaks.



Lifestyle

Childcare

- Robust
- affordable and flexible childcare



Working hours

- Flexible working hours to support carer responsibilities

Meetings

- Within working hours, not in family time



Potential solutions targeted at the organisation



Organisational inclusivity:

How are part-timers, women on maternity leave, and women on career breaks included in the life of the organisation?

Departmental roles and responsibilities:

- Review committees for gender balance
- Ensure female representation on selection panels
- Ensure women are at all levels of the organisation,
- Ensure women are visible both internally and externally
- Encourage leadership development for all.



Athena SWAN Charter for women in science

Recognises commitment to advancing women's careers in STEMM academia (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics and Medicine)

Bronze

Bronze Award holders:

- Demonstrate particular challenges and plan activities for the future.
- Use quantitative and qualitative assessment to identify challenges and opportunities.
- Have a plan that builds on this assessment, and lessons from any activities already in place.

Silver

Silver Award holders:

- Demonstrate particular challenges and plan activities for the future.
- Demonstrate that action has been taken in response to previously identified challenges.
- Demonstrate the impact of the actions implemented.

Gold

Gold Award holders:

- Demonstrate a substantial and well-established activity and achievement record in working towards equality in career progression in STEMM.
- Show initiative to increase numbers of women students.
- Demonstrate beacon activities in gender equality to the wider community.

Potential catalyst for change.

The Chief Medical Officer announced (2011) that the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) would only expect to shortlist medical schools for biomedical research centre and unit funding if the school holds a Silver Athena SWAN award.

Six principles represent the cornerstone of Athena SWAN:

1. To **address gender inequalities** requires commitment and action from everyone, at all levels of the organisation
2. To tackle the **unequal representation of women** in science requires changing cultures and attitudes across the organisation
3. The **absence of diversity at management and policy-making levels** has broad implications which the organisation will examine
4. The **high loss rate of women** in science is an urgent concern which the organisation will address
5. The system of **short-term contracts** has particularly negative consequences for the retention and progression of women in science, which the organisation recognises
6. There are both personal and structural **obstacles to women making the transition from PhD into a sustainable academic career** in science, which require the active consideration of the organisation.



Athena SWAN actions at Durham

Actions:

- examination of gender distribution in staff roles
- survey of staff
- focus groups with staff to understand barriers and identify solutions

Plans:

- Set up mentoring for women – key leaders to be trained
- Senior women (below professor) nominated to attend national leadership training
- Set up conference to support women's careers
- New post created – Dean for diversity to promote women's progression
- Promotion document to be revised to align better with teaching fellows
- Promotion workshops set up
- New process for recruitment to School Committees set up



Conclusions

Women are still under represented in senior and leadership positions

- Women's roles as carers and part-time workers disadvantage them
- Organisations do not recognise that women increase their productivity in the later part of their career
- Organisations have a narrow view of the ideal academic
- Do not recognise the benefits of having a diverse leadership

Solutions need to be targeted at:

- Women e.g. mentoring, sponsorship and support networks
- The organisation e.g. flexible working, committee members, selection panels
- Consider setting up a catalyst to change e.g. Athena SWAN



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Medical Women's International Association

<http://www.medicalwomensfederation.org.uk/about-us/medical-women-s-international-association>

Athena SWAN Charter for women in science

<http://www.athenaswan.org.uk/>

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Thank you!

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