

Academic Rank, Medical Specialty, and Income - Differences between Female and Male Physicians in Israel

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Background

The proportion of female physicians has increased in recent decades. However, there may still be disparities in academic rank, medical specialty, and income between female and male physicians. Previous studies reported barriers such as differences in salary, task assignment and clinical opportunities, as well as discrimination related to pregnancy and childcare. Recognizing these barriers and assessing the inequities can help to quantify disparities and may lead to important programmatic improvements.

Objective

To assess the differences between female and male physicians in Israel in terms of occupational, academic, and economic characteristics.

Methods

A nationwide survey of all registered physicians in the Israel Ministry of Health database was conducted in January 2023. A link to an anonymous survey was sent to physicians whose cell phone number was available. Demographic, occupational, academic, and economic data were collected. Physicians reported their monthly salaries relative to the national average salary, as published by the Central Bureau of Statistics. Univariate and multivariable analyses were performed

Results

A total of 1,595 physicians responded to the survey. The median age was 40 years (IQR 35-48) and 62.3% were females. Male physicians worked more hours per week (median 43, IQR 38-52) and had higher average incomes (median 2.5 times the national average, IQR 1.9-4.0, $p<0.001$) than female physicians (median 50, IQR 40-60; median 2.0 times the national average, IQR 1.5-3.5, $p<0.001$).



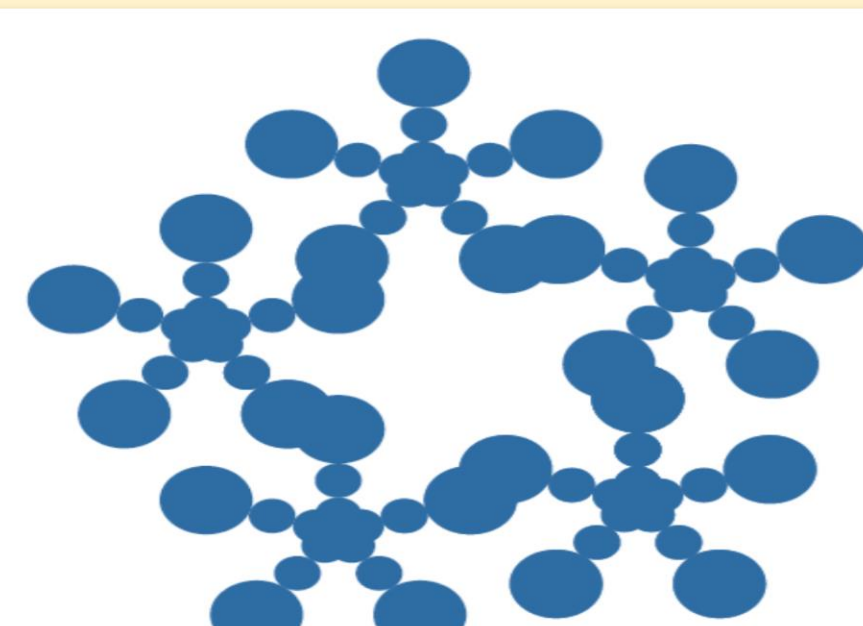
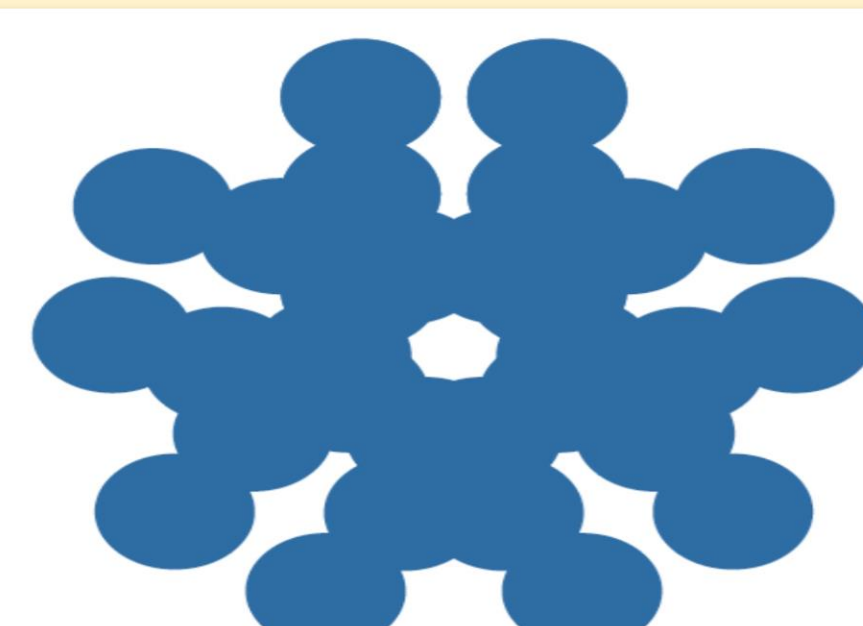
Female physicians were less likely to report senior faculty membership (9.7% vs. 13.3%, $p=0.029$), but this difference was not statistically significant after adjusting for potential confounders ($p=0.132$).

In further analysis, female physicians were less likely to hold professor positions even after adjustment for potential confounders (Adj.OR=0.61, 95%CI 0.27-1.39, $p=0.024$). Female physicians were less likely to hold management position in hospitals (12.5% vs. 16.8%, $p=0.019$) while no difference was observed in the community healthcare system ($p=0.950$). Surgical specialties were less common among female physicians (18.2% vs. 27.4%, $p<0.001$).

Conclusion

Female physicians still occupy a lower position than male physicians in terms of academic rank, and income.

Gender transformative policies and interventions are essential for addressing inequities and eliminating gender-based discrimination. These interventions should focus on removing barriers and supporting access to professional development and leadership roles.



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