

Letter to the Editor

Women in Dermatology

Dear *Cutis*[®]:

It has been well-studied that there is a workforce shortage of dermatologists in the United States.¹ A survey administered to practicing dermatologists reported that the mean wait time for new patient appointments was 36 calendar days, and 25% (N=1425) of dermatologists surveyed said the wait time was 60 days or more. Almost half (49%) of the dermatologists believed that their community needed more dermatologists; 90% of these dermatologists reported a need for more medical or general dermatologists. The mean duration to search for a dermatologist to join a practice was 16 months, and the search often was unsuccessful.¹

The workforce shortage is further compounded by the fact that although a higher percentage of women are graduating from medical school, it has been found that female dermatologists see patients fewer hours per week than male dermatologists (average of 26 h/wk vs 31 h/wk, respectively).² The total number of female dermatology residents in 1999, 2001, and 2003 was 131 (46.8%), 165 (56.1%), and 174 (57.0%), respectively.³ However, the percentage of female dermatology residents may rise because programs are now accepting more female residents. An increase in the number of female dermatology residents also would impact academics because it has been shown that women are less likely to enter academics in general,³ possibly because of various obstacles, such as a lack of tenured positions for women.⁴

A 1994 report showed that women comprised 28.1% of total dermatology faculty and 30.7% of paid faculty (N=1454 from 94 programs).⁵ Of the paid faculty, only 10.7% of full professors were women, while 34.1% of associate professors were women and 38.1% of assistant professors were women. Only 2 departments of dermatology and one division of dermatology with a residency training program were led by women. It was thought that barriers existed, preventing the

advancement of women in academic positions.⁵ Therefore, although more women are entering the workforce, these barriers may prevent women from entering or staying in academics.

A study by Wu et al⁶ analyzed characteristics of 107 dermatology residency programs and determined factors correlating with producing full-time academic dermatologists. The researchers found that by the end of 2004, there were 982 full-time faculty, of which 38.5% were women.⁶

In 10 years (from 1994 to 2004), it appears that women have started to break through academic advancement barriers. The percentage of full-time faculty who were women increased from 30.7% to 38.5%.^{5,6}

It is my belief that not only are women taking a higher percentage of full-time faculty positions and chair or chief roles, but they are also assuming more leadership positions in the American Academy of Dermatology and other prominent organizations. Despite the finding that female dermatologists may see patients for 5 fewer hours per week than male dermatologists, women have been making substantial contributions to academic dermatology.

Sincerely,
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