

Average 25% pay gap between men and women doctors largely 'inexplicable'

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According to the latest survey of UK hourly pay by the Office of National Statistics (ONS) female doctors' pay lags behind their male colleagues by 28.6%.

This "eye opener" pay gap, which trends suggest has stood at around 25% on average since 2000, remains largely inexplicable, says John Appleby, Chief Economist at the King's Fund, in an article published in the [British Medical Journal](#) today.

He explores possible reasons for this persistent gender divide in medicine and suggests that doctors have some way to catch up with other health care jobs.

For example, nursing auxiliaries and assistants show the smallest bias in pay towards men, writes Appleby, with women's median hourly pay being 0.1% less than men's. For nurses the pay gap widens to 1.9%.

Female paramedics' and health service managers pay also lags behind their male colleagues by 4.9% and 5.8% respectively, while at 16%, the pay gap for pharmacists is nearly treble this.

Interestingly, female medical radiographers appear to earn 5.3% more than their male counterparts on average, adds Appleby.

But what explains the big gap in [medical practitioners'](#) pay between men and women?

A 2009 study for the BMA suggested that some of the difference may be 'legitimate' and explained by factors such as experience, grade and administrative duties "although why men end up with more experience or on higher grades - and hence more pay - begs some questions," he writes.

Nevertheless, a significant part of the pay gap appeared to be 'unexplained' by such factors. The analysis suggested that female doctors were disadvantaged due to caring roles, a 'hostile culture' and geographical limitations which reduced their ability to change jobs (a key way to increase pay).

"These are of course problems faced by women in other occupations too. But it may be that these factors are more acute for female medical practitioners, suggests Appleby.

"Maybe there are lessons to be learned from some other health care professions, where gender [pay](#) differences are closer to zero," he concludes.

Provided by British Medical Journal

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