

Diversity in graduate medical education; women majority in seven specialties in 2012

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Women accounted for the majority of graduate medical education (GME) trainees in seven specialties in 2012 but in no specialties were the percentages of black or Hispanic trainees comparable with the representation of these groups in the U.S. population, according to a research letter published online by *JAMA Internal Medicine*.

Diversifying the [physician workforce](#) in the United States is an ongoing goal.

Curtiland Deville, M.D., of Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, and coauthors used publicly reported data to assess the representation of women and historically underrepresented minority groups in medicine (URMs), which include blacks and Hispanics.

The results indicate that in 2012 there were:

- 688,468 practicing physicians; 30.1 percent were female; 9.2 percent were URMs, including 5.2 percent who were Hispanic and 3.8 percent who were black
- 16,835 [medical school](#) graduates; 48.3 percent were female; 15.3 percent were URMs, including 7.4 percent who were Hispanic and 6.8 percent who were black
- 115,111 trainees in GME; 46.1 percent were female; 13.8 percent were URMs, including 7.5 percent who were Hispanic and 5.8 percent who were black

Among specialties in 2012, the percentage of female trainees was lowest for orthopedics (13.8 percent) and highest for pediatrics (73.5 percent) and obstetrics and gynecology (82.4 percent). Women also accounted for more than 50 percent of GME trainees in five other specialties: dermatology (64.4 percent), internal medicine/pediatrics (58.2 percent); [family medicine](#) (55.2 percent), pathology (54.6 percent) and psychiatry (54.5 percent), according to the results.

The percentage of black trainees was lowest for otolaryngology (2.2 percent) and highest for family medicine (7.5 percent) and obstetrics and gynecology (10.3 percent), the authors report.

The percentage of Hispanic [trainees](#) was lowest for ophthalmology (3.6 percent) and highest for psychiatry (9.3 percent), family medicine (9 percent), obstetrics and gynecology and pediatrics (each 8.7 percent), the results also show.

"Continued efforts are needed to increase the diversity of the physician workforce in the United States, particularly in the specialties with the lowest representations of women, blacks or Hispanics," the authors conclude.

In a related commentary, Laura E. Riley, M.D., of Massachusetts General Hospital, Boston, writes: "Ensuring a diverse physician workforce will require the continuing attention of medical school leadership and health care systems, and interventions to provide opportunities for diverse physicians to join the leadership ranks. Increasing physician diversity is yet another opportunity to improve the quality of care for all of our patients, particularly the most disadvantaged and those with a disproportionate burden of disease."

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