

Female physicians at public medical schools paid an average of 8 percent less than males

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In what is probably the largest study of salary differences between male and female medical school faculty members, researchers at Massachusetts General Hospital (MGH) and Harvard Medical School (HMS) find that - even after adjusting for factors likely to influence income - women physicians earn an average of \$20,000 per year less

than men. Their study, which analyzed data for physicians employed at 24 public medical schools, is being published online in *JAMA Internal Medicine*.

"More than raising attention to salary sex differences in medicine, our findings highlight the fact that these differences persist even when we account for detailed factors that influence income and reflect academic productivity," says Anupam B. Jena, MD, PhD, of the MGH Department of Medicine and the HMS Department of Health Care Policy, who led the study. "The fact that we observed these income differences among physicians who are public employees raises issues that may have state regulatory implications."

While several previous studies have documented [salary differences](#) between male and female physicians working in academic medicine, those investigations have been relatively small, restricted to specific specialties or depended on participants' responses to survey questions. The current study started with employee information - including names, titles and salaries - from public medical schools in 12 states that make such information available online. The researchers merged that data on physician faculty salaries with information from the Doximity database of more than 700,000 U.S. physicians - including age, gender, faculty rank, university affiliation, specialty, year of residency completion, clinical practice (reflected by receiving Medicare payments) and several factors reflecting research activity.

Among their final sample of almost 10,250 physician faculty members - 35 percent of whom were women - the unadjusted average annual salaries of women were almost 20 percent lower (\$206,641 versus \$257,947) than those of male physicians. After adjusting for the factors mentioned above, female physician faculty members still received salaries 8 percent lower than those of comparable male physicians (\$227,783 versus \$247,661).

Adjusted salary disparities were greatest for orthopedic surgery, obstetrics/gynecology (one of the specialties female physicians were most likely to enter), other surgical subspecialties and cardiology. They were least in family medicine and emergency medicine; and adjusted average salaries for women in radiology were slightly higher than for men. Disparities also varied among medical schools, with adjusted average salaries for male physicians being significantly higher at nine schools - the greatest disparities occurring at schools in the western U.S. - and higher adjusted [salaries](#) for female [physicians](#) at two schools.

Co-author Daniel Blumenthal, MD, MBA, of the MGH Division of Cardiology, adds, "Our findings also highlight how non-traditional data sets like Doximity and public employee salary information can be used to investigate questions that historically have been difficult to evaluate due to lack of access to large-scale data." He is currently using the Doximity database to investigate gender-based differences in academic rank among academic cardiologists.

More information: *JAMA Intern Med.* Published online July 11, 2016. [DOI: 10.1001/jamainternmed.2016.3284](https://doi.org/10.1001/jamainternmed.2016.3284)
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