

Women paid less than men even at highest levels of academic medicine, study finds

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Women who chair clinical departments at public medical schools are paid an average of 88 cents for every dollar paid to their male counterparts, or about \$70,000 to \$80,000 less per year, researchers at

the Stanford University School of Medicine and UC San Francisco report.

The disparity remains regardless of the [women's](#) academic productivity, specialization and years on the job.

"These women are at the top of their game," said Eleni Linos, MD, MPH, a professor of dermatology at Stanford. "They are skilled leaders, outstanding managers and experienced negotiators who have reached top positions in their medical schools. Gender pay gaps are often blamed on women's personal choices to reduce [work hours](#) or leave the workforce, household responsibilities, childcare or suboptimal negotiation skills. This study challenges these traditional explanations because our sample of medical department leaders have navigated these complex challenges and broken through the 'glass ceiling.' Yet they are still paid less than their male peers when controlling for many factors. Our study shows the pervasiveness of gender inequities at all levels of academic medicine."

Linos shares senior authorship of the study, which will be published March 2 in *JAMA Internal Medicine*, with Christina Mangurian, MD, professor of psychiatry at UCSF. Michael Mensah, MD, MPH, a former medical student at UCSF who is now a psychiatry resident at UCLA, is the lead author of the study.

The researchers surveyed publicly available salary information from 29 public medical schools in 12 states. They compared the average salaries in 2017 of 550 chairs of clinical departments. About one-sixth of the chairs were women, who, the researchers found, earned about \$80,000 less per year than their [male counterparts](#).

The researchers then controlled for the position's title to avoid comparing interim appointments with permanent positions; regional cost of living differences; length of time each person held the position; and

academic specialization. But the disparity remained, with women earning about \$70,000 less per year than the men.

Controlling for the number of academic publications and grants awarded by the National Institutes of Health, the researchers found that women earned about \$63,600 less than men.

"When you adjust for all these factors, you still see a pay gap," Linos said. "This calls into question the common explanations for gender disparities and highlights a pervasive structural problem that needs to be addressed. Women are regularly paid less than men, even at the highest levels of academic medicine."

More information: *JAMA Internal Medicine* (2020). [DOI: 10.1001/jamainternmed.2019.7540](https://doi.org/10.1001/jamainternmed.2019.7540)

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