



## NIH **U**dates on Women in Science News for Yo**U** to Use!

Halle Ritter, Writer  
Keren Witkin, Ph.D., Editor  
Office of Research on Women's Health  
Office of the Director, National Institutes of Health  
United States Department of Health and Human Services

### Volume 4, Issue 1 (January-February 2011)

*NIH Updates on Women in Science is brought to you by the [NIH Working Group on Women in Biomedical Careers](#). We encourage you to share this e-newsletter with colleagues who may find it of interest.*

\*\*\*\*\*

#### Contents of this Issue

[Statistics on Women in Medical School Released](#)

[NIH Grant Application Changes to Allow Explanation of Less Productive Periods](#)

[Unexplained Starting Salary Gap Between Female and Male Physicians Emerges](#)

[NIH Recommends Increased Training in Graduate Programs](#)

[Factors Other than Sex Discrimination May Account for Underrepresentation of Women in Science](#)

\*\*\*\*\*

## **Statistics on Women in Medical School Released**

The American Association of Medical Colleges released a report breaking down current and historical statistics on medical school applicants, matriculants, and graduates by gender. According to the report, this year's proportion of female applicants was 47.3%, down from a high of 50.8% in 2003-2004. The proportion of female matriculants has remained fairly constant over the past several years, and currently stands at 46.9%. The graduation trends have historically matched matriculation trends, with women currently comprising 48.3% of medical school graduates.

[U.S. Medical School Applicants and Students 1982-1983 to 2010-2011](#)

## **NIH Grant Application Changes to Create a More Family-Friendly Process**

In response to an article published in *The New York Times* regarding why female scientists leave research science fields at a much higher rate than men, research-bloggers suggested that the NIH modify their grant applications using the Canadian Institutes of Health application format. Modified applications would contain a designated spot for grant applicants to list "expected interruptions and delays" in the biographical sketch area. Bloggers proposed that inclusion of this section would indicate that the NIH understands personal and family-related delays, and would likely result in funding of additional meritorious grants.

[A Simple Change Would Help the NIH Grant Process Contribute Less to the Leaky Pipeline](#)

[NIH Take Note](#)

[NIH Took Note](#)

## **Unexplained Starting Salary Gap Between Female and Male Physicians Emerges**

The *Journal of Health Affairs* published a study examining trends in starting salaries of male and female physicians, and analyzing the possible causes of a salary gap. Researchers used data from the New York State Survey of Residents Completing Training, comprising data from over 37,000 physicians from 1999 to 2008. The study found that at the beginning of the sample period, the male physicians had a 12.5% greater starting salary on average, which increased to a 17% advantage by 2008.

After controlling for factors such as specialty, ethnicity, and age, the discrepancy dropped to statistical insignificance in 1999, but retained significance in 2008. In the 1999 data, many more women than men entered lower-paying primary care specialties, a discrepancy no longer visible in 2008. While the data suggested that the salary differences in early years could be attributed to the greater number of women in lower-paying specialties, the 2008 salary discrepancy could not be explained in the same manner and remains unexplained.

[The \\$16,819 Pay Gap for Newly Trained Physicians: The Unexplained Trend of Men Earning More than Women](#)

## **NIH Recommends Increased Training in Graduate Programs**

The National Institute of General Medical Sciences released their final Strategic Plan For Training, which recommends that graduate students receive more training and mentoring. The report raises concerns that research assistantships, comprising the significant majority of graduate support, lose sight of student training in their goal to produce strong research. Members of the Institute's advisory council agreed with the main idea of the plan, but many noted that implementation would have to occur carefully. The plan does not include recommendations on how to accomplish the goal, and some council members voiced concerns that such an objective could hinder research productivity.

[NIH Report Urges Greater Emphasis on Training for all Graduate Students](#)

## **Factors Other than Sex Discrimination May Account for Underrepresentation of Women in Science**

An article in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* on the underrepresentation of women in science examined empirical evidence behind claims of sex discrimination in math-intensive fields. The authors reviewed twenty years of studies on discrimination of women in journal reviewing, grant funding, and hiring, and concluded that there was little evidence to support claims of systematic discrimination. They noted, however, that women scientists tended to have fewer resources, which could account for success differences. They attributed the lack of resources to both free and constrained choices, including women's lower rate of election of science and math fields. The researchers recommended strategies to combat constrained choices, including education and outreach. Additionally, the authors voiced their support of efforts to change institutional culture to be supportive of women's fertility and lifestyle choices, such as part-time flexibility and tenure accommodations.

[Understanding Current Causes of Women's Underrepresentation in Science](#)

\*\*\*\*\*

**PLEASE DO NOT REPLY TO THIS e-NEWSLETTER. To subscribe or unsubscribe, visit the [Women in Science NIH LISTSERV](#). For more information, please contact Keren Witkin, Ph.D., Office of Research on Women's Health, Office of the Director, National Institutes of Health, through the Women in Science mailbox ([womeninscience@nih.gov](mailto:womeninscience@nih.gov)). The views expressed in this e-newsletter do not necessarily reflect those of the U.S. Government.**