Is There A Glass Ceiling Over Female Physician Assistant Educators?

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Purpose
The purpose of this study is to determine if there is a significant difference between male and female PA salaries and if this difference could be further distinguished by rank or position.

Rationale
- Among US physicians, female gender has been associated with lower incomes, even after adjusting for full time employment and work effort. (1) Women physicians who are employed within an academic medicine setting also earn significantly less than their male counterparts. (2, 3) In a national study among full-time U.S. medical school faculty published in 2004, female physician base salary was at a noticeable deficit ($11,691; p=0.01). Advancement was also stunted, with 66% of men but only 46% of women with 15-19 years of experience lifted to full professor rank (p<0.01). (3)
- A growing body of research is showing a persistent wage-gap between male and female physician assistants (PAs). In a 2011 study using data from the American Academy of Physician Assistants (AAPA), clinically active female PAs were found to receive significantly less compensation than their male counterparts. (4) In another study, new female PA graduates entering the workforce were found to earn significantly less than new male PA graduates after adjusting for factors such as age, geographic location, hours worked and hours on call. (5)
- Although it has yet to be studied per se, the PAEA annual report has shown substantial salary differences between male and female PA faculty every single year since the annual report has been published. (6)

Methodology
Data Set
- The 2010 Physician Assistant Education Association (PAEA) Annual Report was analyzed. The full time employed (N=477) were compared for differences in compensation and advancement for male and female PA educators.

Variables
- The salaries of male and female faculty were compared with the variables of rank and position. SPSS Version 20 was used to analyze the data.

Statistical Analysis
- Descriptive statistics and Independent sample t-test were performed to characterize results found by gender for full time employed PA educators.

Results
Female PA educators had a lower base salary than male PA educators comparing only 100% FTE educators. From this report, 477 faculty members indicated full time employment; 168 (35%) men and 309 (65%) women. The average male salary was $92,066 a year while the average female salary was $86,599. The most prominent wage gap exists in the rank of associate professor with males earning $9,849 more. (p <.05) Male salary was higher than female salary in all positions except for admissions and associate director.

Mean Salary of PA Educators

Rank and Salary

Conclusion
- Female PA educators are not as well compensated as their male counterparts. The deficits are seen by rank and position. Advancement is stunted as more women remain in a lower rank and the wage gap persists within each rank.
- More research is needed from the PAEA Annual Report and faculty survey to substantiate this problem. Only once the discrepancies in compensation and advancement are brought to light, can solutions and interventions begin.

References